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MEMORIES OF TWO CITIES

EDINBURGH AND ABERDEEN

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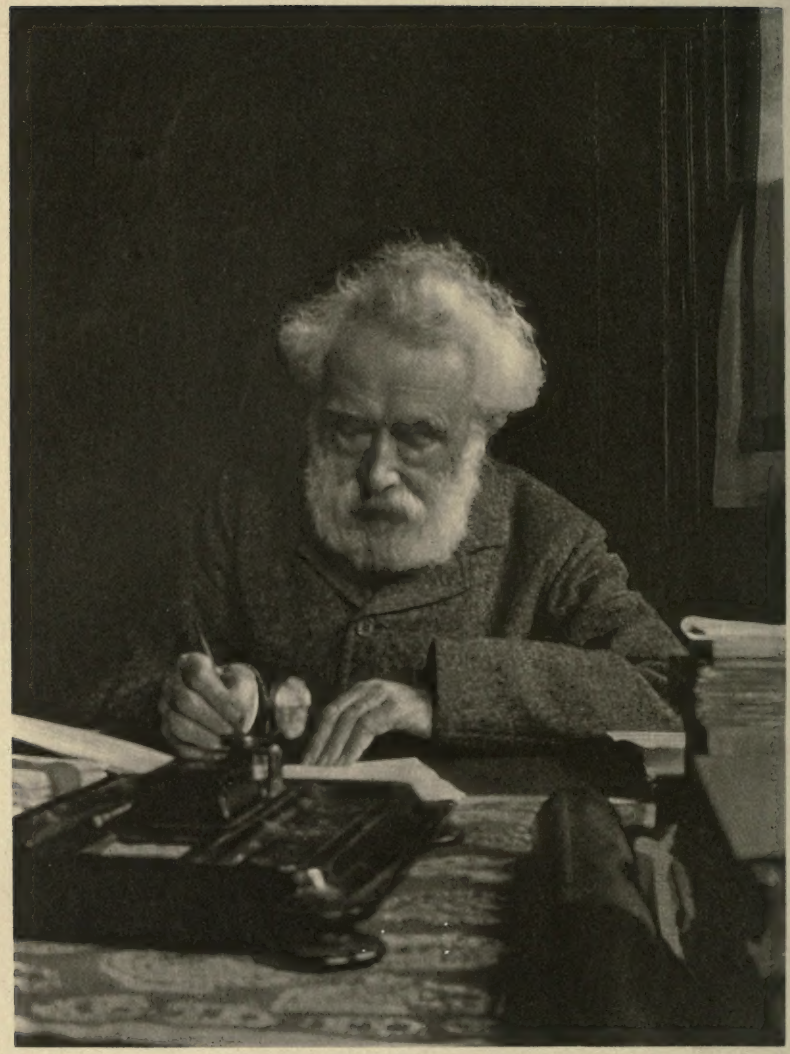


David Masson.

MEMORIES OF TWO CITIES

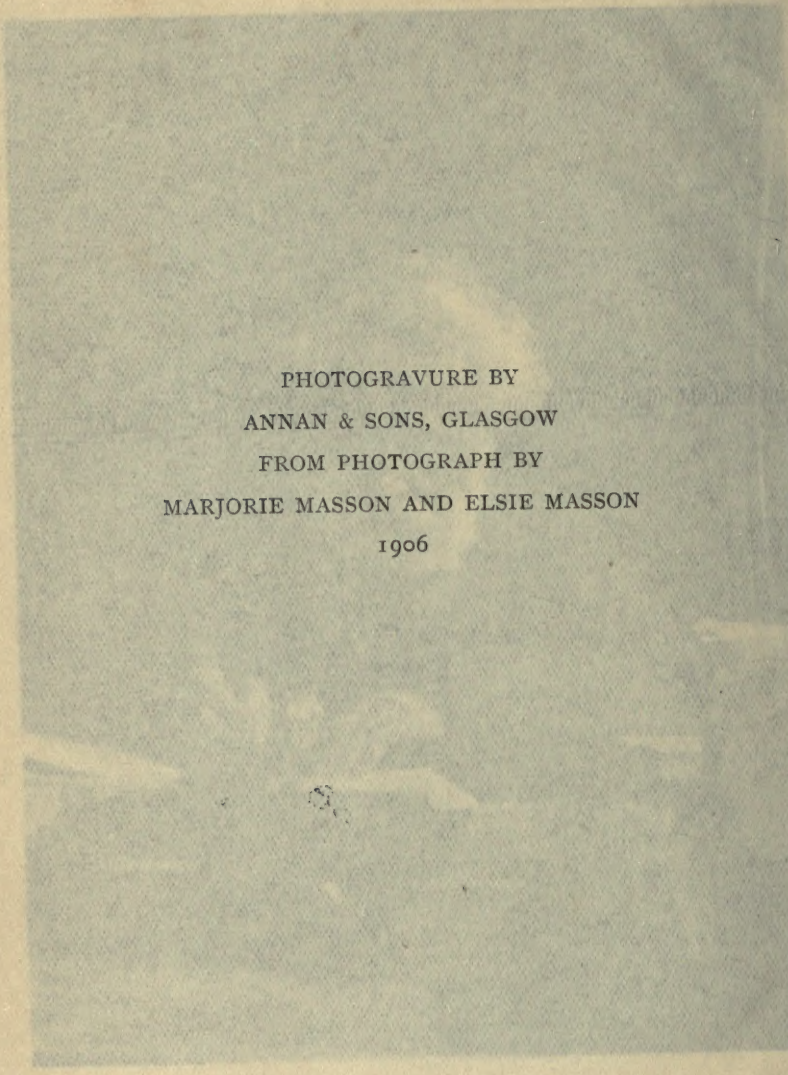
EDINBURGH AND ABERDEEN

BY

DAVID MASSON, LL.D., LITT.D.

3883766
27.8.20

OLIPHANT, ANDERSON & FERRIER
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
1911



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David Masson.

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MEMORIES OF TWO CITIES

EDINBURGH AND ABERDEEN

BY

DAVID MASSON, LL.D., LITT.D.

LATE HISTORIOGRAPHER ROYAL FOR SCOTLAND
LATE PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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27.8.40

OLIPHANT, ANDERSON & FERRIER
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
1911

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Dedicated

IN MEMORY OF DAVID MASSON

TO HIS STUDENTS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

PREFACE

THESE papers, now published in volume form, appeared originally in the years 1864-1865 as contributions to *Macmillan's Magazine*, then a new monthly magazine, started by Messrs Macmillan in London, under David Masson's editorship.

It was my father's wish that they should one day be republished; and for this purpose, towards the end of his life, he occupied himself with their revision. I have now only completed the work of revision begun by himself; and in this I have been ably assisted by Mr W. Forbes Gray, to whom I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks.

The photograph of David Masson that appears as frontispiece was taken by two of his granddaughters, the daughters of Professor Orme Masson of Melbourne University. It was taken in the summer of 1906, and represents him at his own writing-table, at the time when he was occupied in the revision of these papers.

FLORA MASSON.

EDINBURGH, 1911.

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CHAPTER I

"EDINA, SCOTIA'S DARLING SEAT"

"Edina, Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once, beneath a monarch's feet,
Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly-scattered flowers,
As on the banks of Ayr I strayed,
And singing lone the lingering hours,
I shelter in thy honoured shade."

SUCH was Burns's salutation to Edinburgh when first, as a visitor from his native Ayrshire, he found himself within the often-imagined precincts of the capital city. The phrasing of the lyric might have been better; but the enthusiasm of feeling appropriate to the occasion is exactly conveyed. The salutation may serve yet as an expression of that uniform exultation of sentiment with which any provincial Scotsman, young enough and cultured or *un*cultured enough to be capable of such sensations, looks round him for the first time in the metropolis of his nation. Not only from marking scattered flowers in Ayrshire, but from footing the heather in the Perthshire or the western Highlands, or from gathering granite chips in Aberdeenshire, or from making sealskin pouches, or whatever other unimaginable thing they do to beguile time, in the remote Orkneys and Shetlands, it *is* a heart-rousing experience for the Scottish

provincial to find himself in Edinburgh. Whencesoever he comes from the varied little area, he retains his attachment to that, as peculiarly his native district; but all are equally possessed by the general idea of an integral Scotia to which they belong by a higher being than their provincialism; and of this Scotia the darling seat and centre, in the imagination of all, *is* that romantic city, "piled deep and massy, close and high", which gazes over the Firth of Forth from its queenly throne of heights on the southern side.

All this may be very absurd and very contrary to the latest views in British history and ethnology. The very name Edinburgh, it may be said, indicates that the town was originally "Edwin's Burg"—a fortress or stronghold, in the seventh century, of the Northumbrian King Edwin, and therefore then on the Anglian or North-English ground. Nay, are there not Anglian ethnologists who inform us out and out that there is not and never has been in nature any legitimate historical entity answering to the name of Scotland, and that the fussy supposition of such an entity was originally a swindle, and has descended as a hallucination? New lights are new lights, and we should be always learning; but, if the notion of a Scotland is a hallucination, there are no facts, and Time is a smoker of opium.

Certain it is that, just about the time when a kingdom founded itself in South Britain, which came to be called England, a smaller kingdom founded

itself in North Britain under the name of Scotland, acknowledging a dynasty of native Gaelic descent—the boundary between the two kingdoms being a wavering one, which tended to settle about the line of the Tweed. Certain it is, too, that while the capital, or political centre of gravity, of this North-British kingdom had orginally been, now here and now there, to the north of the Lothians—at Perth, at Dunfermline, at Stirling—it gradually, as the weight of the Anglian portion of the population in proportion to the rest increased, tended to the south, till at last Edinburgh, which had had its Holyrood since the twelfth century, became the fixed seat of government.

From the beginning of the fifteenth century, or just when the reigns of the Stuart kings began, and the course of Scottish history becomes somewhat definite for the modern eye between its always picturesque banks, Edinburgh was the undoubted capital. It has continued such ever since. Even after the Scots, in their generosity, had handed over the use of their Stuarts to the English, and had consented to get along themselves without a king's actual presence among them, or only with his presence now and then when he could be spared a week or two from London, all the rest of the central apparatus of nationality—including a Chancery and a Parliament which it would have "binifited your sowls" to look at—was kept in gear close by St Giles's kirk in the heart of Auld Reekie. Nay,

even when there came to be an end of that "auld sang" too, and the ancient kingdom vanished, as a separate state, from the nature of things, and its Parliament was carried away in a coach to be pieced ingeniously into that of Westminster, Edinburgh's consciousness of being the capital of one bit of the island did not wholly cease, and there were still functions and ceremonies to maintain the tradition.

And so we arrive at that Edinburgh of the eighteenth century which Burns saw and saluted with so much emotion. It was then still mainly the dense-packed, high-edificed "Old Town", piled wondrously on every available foot of the great ridge from the Castle to Holyrood, with Arthur Seat behind, and, on the other flank, a vacant chasm, and a tract of steep descents to the flats of the Forth. But, even as Burns was looking, the "Old Town" was beginning to burst its bounds, and to spill itself over the fields around, and down those steep descents towards the flats; and, now that the process is complete, there is not only the "Old Town", venerable on its site as ever, but there is the new city as well; and the two together form that matchless Edinburgh of the nineteenth century in which Scotsmen feel a double pride, which tourists have called "the modern Athens," and whose beauty is, every year more and more, one of the rumours of the world.

"Even thus, methinks, a city reared should be,"

says the classic and English Hallam;

"Thus should her towers be raised; with vicinage
Of clear bold hills, that curve her very streets,
As if to indicate, 'mid choicest seats
Of Art, abiding Nature's Majesty,—
And the broad sea beyond, in calm or rage
Chainless alike, and teaching liberty."

What Edinburgh came to be to me during my residence in it—into what a passion, not wholly gone from my fibre yet, my love of it gradually grew—prose is too shamefaced to be able to tell. It is true that, at first, the provincial obstinacy was strong, and one kept oneself on critical guard, and would not acknowledge or admire more than could be helped. Edinburgh was built of freestone, and what was freestone after the grey granite of Aberdeen? "Why, you could *howk* through these houses with a rusty nail!" two fellow-Aberdonians would say to each other, as they walked along Princes Street, and remembered Union Street in their native town. Suppose them led through Moray Place by their Edinburgh friends, and asked what they thought of it. "Very fine, certainly; but you should see our Golden Square," one of the two would say audaciously, winking to the other—said Golden Square, whose splendiferous name had suggested it, being a tidy square enough, but of a size to go into a hat-box in comparison. And so of moral and social features. What a lingo the Edinburgh populace had, what a pronunciation, what a queer accent and usage of voice, as compared with that perfect speech and exquisitely-delicate

modulation for which the Aberdonians are famous! One picked up phrases in the streets—such as "There it's" for "There it is"—which betokened that one was among strangers; nay, one maintained, with conscious pride, that the very oaths heard in Edinburgh were of a poor and effeminate quality, that northern blasphemy was far superior, and that expressions which served to convey an Edinburgh carter's wrath in the last stage of articulate excitement would in Aberdeen be but the easy utterances of a moderately-vexed lassie.

But soon all this oppugnancy, or mock-oppugnancy, died away, and one was conquered, lovingly conquered, into sympathy with the air, the manner, and all the enchanting conditions of the noble city. The novelty of the freestone wore off, and it began to seem the finest stone in the world, pleasant after the granite even because of its more manifest softness and its warmer colour. The mere walk through the chief streets, and squares, and crescents, and terraces, came to be a daily delight—whether those most frequented, but where still the bustle was not great; or those on the outskirts, where there were large interspaces of gardens, and the solitude was so undisturbed by foot or wheel that the chinks between the paving-stones were green with growing grass, and in one or two places there was the cawing of a colony of rooks nested on the tops of a few tall trees level with the upper windows of the houses. And soon the dialect of the place,

and all its characteristic sounds of life, from its ringing street-cries in the morning, when the Newhaven fish-women went their round, to the thousand lesser vocal peculiarities that struck one strangely at first, became familiar and kindly. And, in the end, one was attuned to Edinburgh, as by a kind of new nativity that obliterated much in the old, or by a naturalization at due season in an element to which one had always had a prescriptive right—for was not Edinburgh the metropolis to all North Britons alike?—but in the actual introduction to which there was a sense of enlargement, of participation in a world of richer, freer, and more poetic associations. What Edinburgh became to me, I repeat, the modesties of writing in such matters will not permit me to express. Her very dust to me was dear.

Always one of the first views, on approaching the city from a particular quarter, was that which gave you, once for all, the bold, romantic outline of the whole—the high, rock-rounding Castle on one side, the monumented Acropolis of the Calton Hill on the other, the ridgy mass of building between, and behind all, the noble shoulder and peak of Arthur Seat, and the great scarped curve of Salisbury Crags. This was a view repeated again and again, with variations, in a thousand subsequent walks about the suburbs, till Arthur Seat became to you, not from one point but from many, actually that couchant lion keeping guard over the city into

which the local myth has interpreted its form. Next after this view in frequency, if not the most frequent view of all after you were a denizen of the city, was the interior view in the walk along Princes Street. Walking along this street—which you could not but do twice or thrice every day—you were in the bisecting valley between the New Town and the Old; and, if your course was eastward, you had on your right the grassy steeps of the Castle-rock, and then the quaint, dense, sky-serrated mass of tall, many-storeyed old houses, the main Edinburgh of the past, which, detaching itself from the Castle, with the name of the High Street, descends, as the Canongate, towards Holyrood Abbey and Palace. It was a walk in which you always lingered, a view varying as it was morning or evening, sunlight or grey weather, and of which you never tired.

Then, if you took but a few steps out of Princes Street, by the open way, called the Mound, leading up to the Old Town, and from that partial elevation stopped to look westward, what a change in the panorama! You were in the very heart of a city, and yet, lo! both near at hand and afar off, a sylvan land—closest of all to the city the softly-wooded Corstorphine Hills, and, beside and beyond them, expanses dying to distant beginnings of mountains and a horizon of faint amethyst. Perhaps you completed the ascent into the Old Town, and, turning up the High Street to the Castle esplanade,

passed the portcullised gateway over the dry moat, and threaded the rocky and winding path within the gate, amid the lounging soldiers and pacing sentries of the garrison, till you came out on the highest battlements beside huge superannuated Mons Meg and the inferior modern cannons to which she has resigned her duty. From that magnificent station in the high cool air you would gaze, it might be for half an hour or more, northwards, northwards, and all around. What a grand range of survey! Beneath you, paralleled and rectangled over a succession of slopes, the whole of the new city and its gardens, so that the cannon from where you stood could blast it into ruins at a descending angle, and so that always, when they do fire on peaceful gala-days, the windows of the city rattle and shiver with the far-going reverberation; beyond this city the villa-studded banks of the Forth; again beyond these the Firth's own flashing waters; and, still beyond even these, the towns, villages, and heights of the opposite Fifeshire coast. On either side, too, with scarce a turn of the head, other views for many a league, till you could make out, on a clear day, that the risings in the amethystine distance to your left were really the summits of the far Highland mountains.

If, instead of the Castle, it was the Calton Hill that you favoured—and to walk round the Calton Hill was a matter of course in any five minutes of spare time that might happen thereabouts—there

was something of the same vastness in the *ensemble*, but with much of sea-change. Sea-change, I say; for, though from one part of this walk round the Hill there was a perspective of the line of Princes Street and of the main adjacent city, and from another there was the finest view of Holyrood down in its valley and of Arthur Seat rising behind, what ravished one through the main part of the circuit was the Firth and its shores—the Firth, either widening out to the open sea-haze between Fife-Ness and North Berwick Law, and showing through the haze the dim shapes of islands and headlands, and of bays beyond dusky Leith, brick-coned Portobello, and the other near coast-towns, or else winding and narrowing more clearly inland to where, over a maze of streets and chimney-stacks crowded under the very base of the hill, the sites of Burntisland, Aberdour, Inverkeithing, and the other coast-towns of Fife, directly opposite to Edinburgh, seemed so definite as to be within arm's hail or other friendly signal. For this characteristic sight, however, of the Firth's waters and the Fifeshire coast from the very heart of Edinburgh, you did not need to ascend any height. Walking in George Street, the next parallel of the New Town to Princes Street, there, at every gap or crossing, you had the same vision of the Firth and of the far Fifeshire coast flashed momentarily upon you; and, if you descended one of those cross-streets, leading down the well-gardened declivity, the vision was permanent.

But why attempt an inventory of the endless points of view, within or close by Edinburgh, where the power of its manifold attractions made itself felt? Descend to its old Grassmarket and look up thence at one end of the great Castle on its most lofty and precipitous side; dive down its Canongate, or place yourself wherever else, deep amid the old and tall houses, you were most shut in from air and an open view in any direction except overhead—there, not the less for all the squalor of the social degeneracy that now tenants these localities, there was still the abounding picturesque. Pass to the opener and newer parts of the city, and everywhere, despite drawbacks, there was richness of new effect. Widen your range and again circumambulate the suburbs, bit by bit, close round the site of the actual city, and you enclosed, as it were, all the interest now accumulated for you on the built space within a circumference of interest equally detailed and various.

Finally, to ring in the whole imaginatively, and partly to sever the aggregate Edinburgh you knew from the surrounding country, partly to connect it therewith, there were the walks and excursions that could be taken on any vacant afternoon. Of these—whether for the geologist (for whom the whole vicinity of Edinburgh is specially rich in instruction) or for the pedestrian of vaguer natural tastes—there was great variety of choice. You might climb Arthur Seat by the shoulder or the

peak, or you might round the curve of Salisbury Crags, and so find yourself, on the other side, on the quiet edge of Duddingston loch and village, beautiful themselves, and with miles of southern quietude and beauty beyond. The easiest amount of persistence from where you then were, by pleasant roads and past quaint villages, would take you to the celebrated loveliness of Roslin, and the fairy haunts of Hawthornden. Or, starting through one part of the Old Town, by way of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, you came, by Merchiston Castle, to sunny Morningside, whence before you lay the Braid Hills and the great brown range of the larger Pentlands; and so, past the Braid Hills, till you did gain the Pentlands and were footing, out of ken of man, and with a climber's quickened breath, a wilderness of glorious moor.

Or, choosing another direction, and taking Dean Bridge over the great dell of the Water of Leith from the west end of the town, you might follow the wide Queensferry Road, with open views all the way, as far as Craigleith Quarry, where, down in a vast hole, the depth of which from its precipitous edges made you dizzy, you heard the clank of hammers on iron, and saw horses and carts moving, and, here and there, men blasting the freestone; or, if you deviated from the main Queensferry Road into the quieter and narrow road parallel to it on the left, you might have a sweeter walk still by the lovely woods and house of Ravelston, sheltered

inimitably in their exquisite nook, and might thence continue to turreted Craigcrook, antique in its grounds of roses and evergreens, or lose yourself, above Craigcrook, among the soft heights of the protecting Corstorphines. This last was from the first, and always remained, a favourite walk with me—sometimes, when its delicious peacefulness was new to me, inviting the companionship of a book. Of other excursions there were those northwards and Firthwards; and, then, whether it was the broad road to Portobello and its somewhat blackish sands that you took, or the more country walk to Newhaven and the fine pure shore at Granton, you had here also enjoyment by the way, and you brought back recollections of spots where you had sat listening to the sea-roar, and watching the surges over rocks or shingle. There was one spot amid rocks, under a bank at Granton, where Tennyson's "Break, break, break," was never out of one's thoughts, and one hummed it till the changed fringe of the tide told that the day was waning.

In all towns or cities, be they what they like during the day, the nocturnal aspects are impressive. Night flings her mantle over the mean; and, wherever, even on the flattest ground, there are piles of building, or objects in blocks, with gaps of intersection, she plays among these a poesy of her own in endless phantasies of dark and silver. But Edinburgh, by reason of her heights and hollows,

invests herself at night more wondrously than any city I have seen with this mystery of the vast terrestrial shadow struggling below with the lurid artifice of lamps, or star-pierced from above till it yields in azure. What a spectacle is that of the ordinary walk along Princes Street at night, when the windows of the Old Town are lit, and across the separating chasm there looms darkly, or is seen more clearly, the high, continuous cliff of gables, irregularly brilliant with points of radiance! And, O! the circuit of the Calton Hill at night! As it is, you hardly meet a soul on the deserted heights; but well might it be the custom —and, if the clergy did their duty, they could make it such—that the hill at night should be sacred and guarded, and that every man, woman, and child in the city should once a week perform the nocturnal walk round it as an act of natural worship. It would be a stated culture of the religious sentiment, a local preservative against Atheism, by so simple a means as the teaching given to the eye by masses of darkness broken by arrays of lamps. I speak not of the retrospect of the glittering length of Princes Street and its adjacencies, fascinating though that be; nor yet of the mightier spaces of gloom towards Holyrood and Arthur Seat, or eastwards and seawards; I speak of that point in the circuit, the day-vision from which, to the left over the Firth, I have already described, and whence now, when the night is dark, and the maze of streets

sheer beneath you and the declivities beyond these show their myriads of lights, you seem to be gazing down on no scene of earth at all, but on some reflected galaxy or firmament of illusion.

Nor for something of this effect was it necessary always to take the walk round the Hill. There were points in the city itself in which, from the streets, or from the windows looking Firthwards, there was the same mystery of ranges and islets of light in distances of gloom. There was one characteristic evening sight in some parts of Edinburgh, which was a spiritual metaphor in itself. It was the gleam, afar off on the Firth, of the light of Inchkeith, as it brightened, flashed, died away, and disappeared—disappeared till hope and watching brought it round again. This sight accompanied you in any nocturnal walk in not a few of the suburbs.

Enough of the city itself, and its environs. Invest this city now with its historical associations, with the collective traditions of the life that had passed through it. In this respect, indeed, what North Briton, not insane with patriotism, would dare to compare Edinburgh with London? Through that vaster city, the metropolis from of old of a tenfold larger nation, there has passed, in its series of generations, a world of life, national and more than national, in comparison with which the sum-total of past existence represented in Edinburgh would be but as one of Scotland's narrow glens to a great and varied champaign, or as one of her mountain-

torrents to the large flow of the Thames. But, partly from the very intensity and compactness of the little national story which Edinburgh was bound to transmit, partly from the fitter size and structure of the city for the task of such transmission, Edinburgh has certainly conserved her historical traditions more visibly and tenaciously than London has conserved hers. Londoners walk in their vast city, careless in the main of its associations with the past; and only professed antiquaries among them take pleasure in Stow's "Survey", and in the collections of parochial and local records which have swelled the original quarto edition of that work into the two huge folios.

But in Edinburgh the mere aspect of things around one compels a constant sense of the antique, and cultivates in the mind of every resident native a definite habit of historical reminiscence. The moment you cross the ravine from Princes Street into the old town, you feel yourself—despite the havoc of recent demolitions and renovations—mentally back among the forms of things of that quaint, close-built Edinburgh of the sixteenth century within which, by marvellous power of packing, the population continued to accommodate itself not only through the whole of the seventeenth century, but also through two-thirds of the eighteenth. Walking amid these forms of old—and especially in that main edificed ridge of the High Street and Canongate, the plan of which is

like nothing so much as the backbone of a fish, sending off numberless spines on either side, in the form of narrow alleys or closes—you can fetch memories from any century, indeed, back to the twelfth. It is at the two ends of the ridge, in the Castle and in Holyrood, that the most ancient traditions of all are clustered; but equally in the Castle, in Holyrood, and in the whole connecting ridge there is perpetuated the period of Scottish History which began with the Stuarts. There, one after another, these sovereigns wrangled, in Court and in Parliament, with their unruly little retinue of nobles; there, between rival aristocratic houses, were the feuds and street-frays which kept the citizens in terror; there, where St Giles's stands, and the house of John Knox projects into the street, was fought the final battle of the Scottish Reformation; there, where they show you Rizzio's blood-stains and other less-doubted relics, were the scenes of Queen Mary's sorrows.

Then, should your fancy bring you on through the reign of Mary's shambling son to that century when his dynasty was naturalized in England, what recollections of a new order crowd upon you, also suggested by the very names and shapes of the fabrics you behold! You see the first national struggle for that Covenant the signing of which was begun in Greyfriars' Churchyard near; you see the rivalry of Argyle and Montrose; you see the dauntless Montrose carried up the street to his

execution; you see the forced restoration of Episcopacy; you see the horrors of that subsequent time when Edinburgh was a place of trial and torture for the poor captive Covenanters, and the gibbet in the Grassmarket was the hideous centre of Scottish History.

But after the storm comes a calm; and, once the epoch of the Revolution is passed, the traditions of Edinburgh are of a quieter and more humorous kind. There was the popular fury, indeed, at the Union, when the negotiations for the detested treaty had to be carried on in cellars and back-courts in the High Street; there was the great Porteous Riot, to which you can, in fancy, see the crowds swarming over again every time you are in the Lawnmarket; and there was Prince Charlie's visit in 1745, with its brief flash of splendour and excitement. But, if Robert Chambers had been your cicerone through the town, and had limited the range of his legends to the nearer and less savage time, what he would have chiefly brought before you, as he led you past close after close between the Castle-hill and Holyrood, and pointed out the old family names inscribed over most of them, and descended one or two of them by way of more exact sample, was that strangely-cosy life of the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century which surprised Colonel Mannering on his celebrated search for Councillor Pleydell. He would have told you, and with ample

illustrations to all the senses at hand, of that state of Scottish society when the aristocracy, the judges, and other men of greatest mark in the land still had their houses in these closes, up their spiral stone-stairs, in their quaint oak-panelled rooms, and in the same houses, in the upper or lower storeys, were crammed the families of shopkeepers, artisans, barbers, laundresses, and Highland caddies, and neighbours living in opposite houses in some courts could shake hands across the courts from their windows, and all went on merrily and hugger-mugger, and yet with the utmost ceremony and punctilio.

Those were the days when the ladies gave tea-parties and oyster-parties by turns, and all the men had their favourite taverns where they mostly lived and drank claret with each other; when the assemblies of the highest rank and fashion were held in rooms the access to which was incredible; when the fair Miss Eglintoune, afterwards Lady Wallace, used to be sent regularly to fill her mother's tea-kettle at the public fountain, and the future Duchess of Gordon, then one of Lady Maxwell of Monreith's beautiful daughters, might be seen riding in the High Street, for girlish amusement, on Peter Ramsay's sow. All this, which Robert Chambers would have related to you in rich detail, you might make out in general for yourself by interpretation of the mere look of things, till, tired of the antiquities of the Old Town, you re crossed the ravine and returned to the New. The

sight there of the Melville monument in St Andrew's Square would suffice to flash on your mind the sole supplement that would then be necessary to complete your summary of Edinburgh history very nearly to the present time—to wit, the recollection of that period of the so-called Dundas Despotism, or of the government of Scotland by one able native family managing it by contract for the Tory English Ministry, during which the Scotland of the eighteenth century rolled, comfortably enough, though tearing at her bonds, into the nineteenth. This period was not fairly ended till the epoch of the Reform Bill.

Out of the total mass of associations with the past life of a community one always selects with especial fondness those that constitute the items of its intellectual and literary history. In this class of traditions Edinburgh, it is needless to say, was sufficiently provided for to satisfy even an enthusiast in such matters at the time when I became resident in it. Here, above all, it is true, one could not, by any exaggeration of patriotic prejudice—and North British capability in that respect is known not to be small—think of Edinburgh as much in comparison with that great London which one had not yet seen, but hoped perhaps one day to see. Chaucer, Spenser, Bacon, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, Dryden, Locke, Pope — these, and numberless literary contemporaries of these, in a splendid and well-known succession of clusters, had been among

the Londoners of their generations, some by birth and others by naturalization. Of such Englishmen as these, therefore, was London able to take account in any collection she might make of her miscellaneous traditions from times prior to the eighteenth century; whereas, if Edinburgh set herself to reckon up the men whom she could claim as the Scottish coevals and equivalents of these, what sort of list could she make out with all her pains, and even with all the rest of Scotland aiding her with stray additions? But, *quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a;* and so one had a satisfaction in clutching out of the rugged old literature of Scotland, whether Latin or vernacular, during the ages when these Londoners had lived, any name or fact that one could connect with Edinburgh. That David Lyndsay could be thought of as having been the satirist and wit of the Court of Holyrood, that George Buchanan had died in a court off the High Street, that Knox had been a historian as well as a reformer, and that at Hawthornden there had lived a poet whom even Ben Jonson liked and had come to visit, were facts of some consequence.

But it was a relief when, passing the time of Allan Ramsay as that of the introduction of the modern British Muses into Edinburgh, in lieu of the more uncouth or quaint native Muses who had been chiefly in possession before the Union, one could see these new Muses fairly taking up their residence in the city. They initiated that North British Literature

which has been continued without a break to our own days, the importance of which in relation to the similar contemporary activity of all the rest of Britain has certainly not been inconsiderable. Of this modern North British Literature, feebly begun while Addison and Pope were alive, and continued with increased force and volume through the reigns of the three last Georges, Edinburgh had been the undoubted Capital; and reminiscences of the celebrities of this Literature formed, accordingly, part of the pleasure of life in Edinburgh. David Hume, Lord Kames, Lord Monboddo, Dr Hugh Blair, the historian Robertson, that Home "whose name is Norval," Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, Tytler of Woodhouselee, Lord Hailes, Dr Adam Ferguson, Henry Mackenzie—of these, and of such less purely literary contemporaries of theirs as the physician Cullen and the chemist Black, one could think as the group of intellectual men resident in Edinburgh and giving brilliance to its society during the latter half of the eighteenth century. One could see the houses where they had lived, whether in the Old Town, or in the New Town; one could make out, with wonderful exactness, from "Kay's Portraits" or otherwise, their physiognomies, their costumes, their entire figure and look among their fellow-citizens; one could imagine the very circumstances of their lives, and associate particular anecdotes of them with the spots to which they referred. Nay, of celebrated visits paid to Edinburgh in the time of

this cluster of its lights by men who did not belong to the cluster—of Smollett's last visit in 1766; of Dr Johnson's in 1773, when Bozzy was at his wit's end with glee, and led him about as Ursa Major; of Burns's visits and temporary residences in 1786-7 and 1787-8—the records were graphically fresh.

And so when, leaving the eighteenth century altogether, and accompanying such survivors of its cluster as Home, Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart, and Henry Mackenzie into the sequel of their lives in the nineteenth, one surrounded these with the men more peculiarly distinctive of that new generation in Edinburgh—Playfair, Leslie, Scott, Jeffrey, Horner, young Brougham, John Allen, Thomas Brown, Thomas Campbell for a time, and others and still others whom these names will suggest. Of this cluster, too, the recollections were vivid around one, in the streets where they had walked, and the houses in which they had been born or had lived. Did you think, for example, of that important evening in the year 1802 when a few ardent young Whig lawyers, with the witty Englishman Sydney Smith among them, conceived the notion of starting the *Edinburgh Review*—you had but to go to Buccleuch Place to see the very domicile, then inhabited by Jeffrey, which had been made historical by that transaction.

But, above all, of course, in every step you took in Edinburgh—in the Old Town or in the New Town, in the heart of its streets or anywhere in its

suburbs—you saw the city of Sir Walter Scott. He was the true *genius loci*, the one all-prevailing presence. And no wonder! Of him, chiefly of all her recent sons, would Edinburgh have been bound to cherish the recollection, if only on account of the superior magnitude and the peculiarly rich and popular cast of his genius. But consider what had been the nature of the life-long work of this genius, and how much of that element of *amor patriæ* in it, which had expatiated indiscriminately over all Scotland, and made every region and district of the little map famous, had shown itself in the concentrated form of an *amor suæ civitatis*, passionate for Edinburgh in particular, studious of every feature of its scenery, and of every scrap of its legends, and so intertwining and adorning these by the wealth of its own fictitious fancies that the reality could no longer be seen for the ivy-like overgrowth, and the only Edinburgh that remained in the world was the Edinburgh of Sir Walter Scott. For Burns, Edinburgh had been "Scotia's darling seat"; for Sir Walter, it had been "mine own romantic town". Even while he lived the fond claim had been ratified, and the people of Edinburgh had identified the fame of their city with strangers, and even its romance to themselves, with the tall well-known figure they could see any day issuing from the house in Castle Street, or limping good-humouredly along Princes Street on its way eastward.

At the time of my first acquaintance with Edin-

burgh, Scott had been seven years dead. The adoring recollection of him that remained was taking the form of the monument to him that now stands so fitly in the heart of the city. The Edinburgh which I came to know was, accordingly, the Edinburgh of a generation later than his. It contained, indeed, many of his junior contemporaries, and some even of his intimate seniors, who had outlived him; but in the main it was occupied with new interests, and found its representatives in a group of celebrities only one or two of whom had culminated along with Scott.

Hazel-eyed little Jeffrey was still alive, verging on his seventieth year, and to be seen either in his Judge's place in the Parliament House, where he had a sharp way of interrupting the barristers and keeping them to the point, or else going to his town-house in Moray Place, or (as on the second time of my seeing him) walking into town from his country mansion of Craigcrook, by the quiet narrow road leading past Ravelston. Dr Chalmers—of almost perfected national fame even while Scott was alive, the types being so different—was in his sixtieth year, living at No. 7 Inverleith Row. Sweeping through George Street, on his way to Blackwood's shop, with his long yellow hair streaming from underneath his wide-rimmed hat, might be seen the magnificent figure of Christopher North, suggesting reminiscences of a wildly-irregular sort of literature which Edinburgh had been giving to the world for the last

twenty years, in supplement both to the fictions of Scott and to the persevering criticism of the Whig Review. Or, going through Great King Street late at night, and passing one particular house there, you might know that within that house there was sitting at that moment among his books a man of powerful head and frame, in the mature prime of fifty, who, when you and the rest of the city were asleep, would still be sitting there with his library-lamp burning, outwatching the Bear with thrice-great Hermes, and unsphering the soul of Aristotle. This was that Sir William Hamilton of whom there had been long so select a fame, and of whom the world was to hear more and more. Of these four, then, you were sure to have daily accounts, as of the city's ascertained chiefs.

But in the community, of some 150,000 souls or thereabouts, amid which these four moved—a community exactly of that size in which, consistently with the freest individual development, there may be the pleasantest sociability, and every one may know every one else worth knowing—there was a mixture of various elements, which afforded to all tastes a choice of other and still other notabilities. Take the profession of the law—always the leading profession in Edinburgh society, and the daily representation of which in term-time in the peripatetic assembly of wigged and gowned barristers, and their attendant writers, in the outer hall of the Parliament House, was and is one of the most

striking sights of the town. In this profession there were at that time not only veteran humorists, like Lord Cockburn, and that Falstaff of Edinburgh, the monstrous Peter Robertson, but many seniors of graver intellectual habits, and not a few younger men rising into forensic or literary distinction.

Again, take the Church. For the gratification of that kind of interest in the Church which depends on the evidence of intellect astir within it, the time was peculiarly fortunate. Not only were there, as usual, all the Edinburgh pulpits among which on Sundays to choose what preacher to hear out of some half-a-dozen of deserved note for different styles of faculty; but the clerical mind was in preternatural commotion out of the pulpit all the week long, and was grappling all around it into sympathetic commotion. The Non-Intrusion Controversy was at its height; the Auchterarder case, the Strathbogie case, and other similar cases, were in all men's mouths; over all Scotland there was a rage of ecclesiastico-political discussion, exercising men's minds in a really extraordinary manner, and filling the air with new phrases and generalizations. But Edinburgh, of course, was the focus of this discussion; and it was there, accordingly, that the meetings were most frequent, that the pamphlets and caricatures were most abundant, and that a Candlish and a Cunningham came forth to lead the clergy.

In the profession of medicine, headed perhaps by

Dr Abercromby, there were not a few others maintaining the old reputation of the Edinburgh school. Then, as a common ground for all the professions, and a centre for all the intellectual interests of the place, there was the noble University, with its large staff of Professors (Chalmers, Wilson, and Hamilton among them), and its crowded lecture-rooms and other means of culture. For education preparatory to the University there were the two great classical lyceums, the High School and the New Academy, besides numberless other schools, general or special, in all parts of the town. The great number of these schools typified to one the fact, otherwise obvious enough, that next to the businesses of the professions, the business of education was in the ascendant.

For the spectacle of manufactures and commerce in their extreme modern dimensions, and of the wealth and the passion for wealth accompanying them, one had to go to other towns, and principally to Glasgow. Of such moderate commerce and industry of various kinds, however, as Edinburgh did require and accommodate, there were competent representatives, who, besides having in their hands, as is usual, most of the civic administration of affairs, mingled freely with the more characteristic professional classes, and formed with them, and with the miscellaneous ingredients which can be supposed existing in such a community in smaller proportions —retired Army and Navy officers of Scottish birth,

a little body of Scottish artists, some native newspaper editors, and a sufficient succession of English residents, and sprinkling of foreigners—the so-called "society" of the place.

In this description of Edinburgh I have tried to figure the whole as it shaped itself to me by degrees. But, at the time of which I speak, I was but on the outer verge of the little world which I was to come to know so well. Of its many attractions there were certainly several, of an entirely general nature, of which I had formed a preliminary notion, and which had influenced me in coming. But my special and immediate fascination thither had been Dr Chalmers.

CHAPTER II

DR CHALMERS: HIS LIFE AND OPINIONS

It was a favourite speculation of Dr Chalmers—well do I remember the walk with him in which he confided it to me with reference to himself,—that, if a man were spared to the age of sixty, he then entered on the "Sabbatic decade" of human life, and ought to be able to look forward to a final ten years of rest and of pious meditation towards Heaven, after the six tens passed in growth, or in labour, controversy, and worldly turmoil.

When I first became acquainted with Dr Chalmers, he was, according to this figure, in the late Saturday evening of his life, or near the end of his sixth decade. His "Sabbatic decade" should have begun on the 17th of March 1840, when he completed his sixtieth year; which birthday of his, as it recurred, we always remembered more by token that it was St Patrick's day, and that the Irish students about the University appeared on it with shamrocks in their hats, and he had always a party of them, shamrocks and all, to dine with him in the evening. But, though that birthday passed, there was no "Sabbatic decade" for him, any more than I suppose there had been for the saint under whose

influence he had been born. The great "Non-intrusion Controversy," as we used to call it, was raging—a controversy, one may say, of his own making; and it was to rage and rage, with new developments—in all of which he had to take part—as long as he remained on the earth. It was at the beginning of one of these new developments, when he was once more a-field as generalissimo, and his hands were full of public meetings, committee meetings, and all the vast business of a difficult national organization—it was then that, in the walk to which I have referred, and which happened after a public meeting, from the fag-end of which, and its last hurrahings and clutchings of him, he had managed to escape, he broke out thus to me, with pain in his voice, "Oh! this is not what I thought to be doing in my old age! The years of man being threescore and ten, the last ten should be for all a kind of Sabbatic decade. What I used to look forward to was such a Sabbatic decade for myself at the close of my life—a time for peace, and piety, and Christian literature." He paused a little, and then muttered to himself, "peace, and piety, and Christian literature," as if they were items he had thought of well. The time was never to come. He was then founding the Free Church; and though, during the closing year or two of his life, he did withdraw himself from as much of the formal business of that Church as might then be resigned to younger men, he was, in one way or another, in harness to the last.

While the form of Dr Chalmers's career was indubitably that of a theologian and ecclesiastic—nay, while it was that of a theologian and ecclesiastic in the popularly-constituted and not very learned church of a small Presbyterian nation, and while it ended in hurling that nation into an agony the results of which do not for the present seem to outsiders to have been particularly beautiful,—yet he was such a man by nature, was so manifestly a commissioner of ideas, and gave such dignity and significance to his career by the magnificence of his method in it, that I know of no recent British life more worthy of study than his.

A long while ago, when George the Third was King, and Pitt was the minister in possession, and when the French Revolution was at its most frantic height, so that the soul of Burke was more appalled than ever, and Britain had at last unanimously adopted his policy, and flung itself, at the head of a European coalition, into war with the French demons—back in those old days I can see the venerable University town of the East Neuk of Fife, pursuing the even tenor of its way, and the flutter in its quiet streets of the little flock of students then attending the classes, and hearing such rumours of the great events of the world as were brought, by slow means of communication, into that angle of Scotland. From that little flock of students I can pick *him* out—the largest-headed,

dreamiest-eyed youth among them all. He is very young—absurdly young, according to our present notions, for his stage at the University; the youngest St Andrews student of his year indeed, and the youngest that had matriculated at the University in his time, with the exception of a certain John Campbell, the son of a Fifeshire clergyman, then also studying there, and afterwards to be known as the Lord Chancellor of England. But, though of the same Fifeshire birth and breeding, this youth was by no means, even then, one whit like John Campbell. Nature had set very different and more transcendent marks upon him. He was, as we have said, large-headed—to a degree beyond the ordinary standard even of very large heads; brown haired; of strong and broad, rather than very tall, build; with features of a large, white, and roughish cast, that would admit of plenty of improving sculpture from the action of the mind within; the forehead very broad; the eyes small, dull, and heavy-lidded, and the space between them particularly wide; the manner absent, but manly, with a tendency to be riotously hearty; the gait, on the whole, awkward, but with a certain unexpected expertness in some movements and gestures, consequent on his being left-handed.

They called him "mad Tam Chalmers". He had been sent, in November 1791, when only in his twelfth year, from his native place of Anstruther, on the other side of the East Neuk, and about ten

miles distant from St Andrews, to begin his studies at college along with an elder brother. His father—a man of great integrity, piety, and good humour—was a dyer, shipowner, and general merchant in the then Scottish sense of the term, in Anstruther; and, of a family of fourteen born to him and his wife, Elizabeth Hall—a grave, methodical, and anxious-tempered woman of the same county—Thomas was the sixth.

For his first two sessions at St Andrews he had been of note among his class-fellows only for his idle boyishness and extravagant animal spirits—always ready for golf, football, handball, a ramble about the town, or a pelting-match on the beach with mussel-shells; in any such frolic always the heartiest and least malevolent in his mirth; but with no sign of intellectualism about him, unless it might be in his vehement and picturesque way of expressing himself, and occasionally in the odd and abstracted mood into which he would fall, with his overweighted head and cloudy and far-separated eyes, till the course of the fun, or the laugh at his expense, had startled him up again. The school at Anstruther had done little for him; and such scraps of his letters of this date as remain show that he had then to trust to Nature for his English spelling and syntax. But, in his third session at St Andrews, a change had happened to him. It was the year 1793-4, when the Revolutionary war on the Continent was raging at its widest and fiercest, and France was

writhing in its terror under Robespierre and the Jacobins, and the Christian religion had been abolished, and the worship of Reason substituted instead. Human Reason, however, had not been so completely aggregated in France, even by the premium thus put upon her residence there, but that some portion of the subtle fluid had been left to float in a more diffused and quiet state through the atmosphere of other parts of the earth. Now, Fifeshire was not quite out of Reason's range; and, in looking about for likely young recruits in that neighbourhood, what quantum of the diffused power was there localized and acclimatized had made a sudden seizure of our big-headed St Andrews student.

To explain the way of the occurrence more prosaically, we may mention that, from singularly unanimous accounts, it appears that St Andrews University had then mainly two things to be proud of—the teaching of her accurate and much-loved philosophical Latinist, John Hunter, then holding the Humanity Professorship; and, along with this, a tradition of unusual mathematical excellence and ardour, dating from the time, some seventeen years previously, when the nominal incumbent of the mathematical chair, Professor Vilant, finding himself disqualified by ill-health, had committed the duties of the chair to well-chosen assistants. First in the series of these assistants had been a Mr Glennie, author of a treatise on projectiles. Then had come a

Mr John West, of whose subsequent life I know little, save that he afterwards went to Jamaica, but who must have been a superb teacher, and who has a reputation yet among mathematicians, and especially among lovers of pure geometry, for his "Elements of Mathematics, comprehending Geometry, Conic Sections, Mensuration, and Spherics," published in 1784—a work remarkable for its original structure, and for its choice collection of theorems and problems.

Out of a little group of young mathematicians formed by West during his assistantship, two, at least, became afterwards distinguished in the scientific world—Sir James Ivory and Sir John Leslie. A third pupil of his, of less general celebrity, but who succeeded him in the assistantship, and won golden opinions from all who knew him there in that capacity, was Dr James Brown, afterwards, for a short time, Professor of Natural Philosophy in Glasgow. Brown was a man of varied accomplishments, of whom Dugald Stewart himself said that he had never met anyone who could converse more elegantly and precisely on mathematical or metaphysical subjects. He had been already the mathematical assistant for some years when Chalmers went to St Andrews; and, by general confession, he and Dr John Hunter were then the only two real lights of the place.

To all appearance, Chalmers had as yet resisted the influence of Hunter. He had not taken to

Latin or to grammar in any form; and, whatever respect he may have had for Hunter, he had not been so pervious to that sort of instruction as that Hunter would have picked him out as a promising student. But on coming, in a more particular manner, in his third session, under Brown's influence, he had been kindled all at once into intellectual enthusiasm. The dormant mathematics in him—and I have hardly ever met a man in whom the mathematical mode of thought, especially in the form of an incessant play of the faculty of number, was constitutionally so strong—the dormant mathematics in him had been roused into conscious action. He was in a fever of mathematics—cultivating both the analytical and the geometrical, but more enamoured, as he continued to avow himself throughout his life, with the direct and frank beauty of geometry than with the charms of her craftier and more far-reaching sister. So far from having to spur him, his teacher had to hold him in. From that time Chalmers was a somebody among the St Andrews youths—one of Brown's best.

And the mathematical wakening-up had been a general wakening-up. During the remainder of his college curriculum we find him mingling with his enthusiasm for mathematics and physics a passion for speculation on moral and social subjects, and gratifying his passion, so far as might be, by active membership in a little society of his fellow-students, calling itself "The Political Society",

and by the reading of particular books. One of the books that took the strongest hold on him was Godwin's "Political Justice"; and it was some time before the doctrines of that work were shaken out of his mind. But perhaps the most curious effect of his general mental rousing by mathematics was that it made him go back, in a way of his own, for some parting benefit from that influence of Hunter, the full benefit of which he had missed. Latin scholarship, indeed, was now past praying for; and all the Latin that Chalmers carried with him during his life might have been held in a tea-cup, while of Greek he had not more than would have gone into the smallest liqueur-glass. But he had set himself with extraordinary energy, in that famous third college session, to the task of learning how to write English, and this with such success that though, when he began, he could hardly spell correctly, he acquired in a marvellously short time the habits of rapid, yet deliberate, composition which remained with him through life, and within two years had formed a style, of peculiar structure, which was substantially Chalmers's to the last.

Thus already in a state of intellectual ferment for two years, Chalmers had passed on, in his sixteenth year, to the four years' course of theology in the same University which was to qualify him, according to Scottish routine, for the clerical profession. These four years were, for him, a period of increased

ferment. I can imagine nothing in the shape of a young mind in a state of action more continuously fervid and tumultuous than the records prove to have been that of this Fifeshire Grostête during these four years—in the winter and spring months attending the theological classes at St Andrews, and varying the somewhat cold and dry doctrine he received there with readings and enthusiastic ruminations of his own, or with talks in-doors and out-of-doors with the companions he found congenial, or with weekly essays and discussions on Free Will, Predestination, etc., in a theological society, where there sat among his fellow-members John Leyden and the future Chancellor Campbell (destined then for the Kirk of Scotland, and not for the Law of England); and in the summer months returning to his father's house at Anstruther, and there or elsewhere expatiating, as he loved to think that Adam Smith had done before him in an equally abstracted mood, among the sea-views of his native coast. They had called him "mad Tam Chalmers" in his undergraduate days—applying the name then to his heavy, bizarre look, and to the extravagant bursts of his humour and animal spirits. But, though the name accompanied him beyond those days into the four years of his theological studentship and riper approach to manhood, it was with an altered and elevated meaning. He was still, indeed, the same bluff, hearty, jovial-mannered youth, whose dreamy-looking eyes, occasional fits

of absence when he would mutter to himself, and eccentricities caused by those fits of absence, betokened the presence of an unusually big Fifeshire bee inside his bonnet. Though he fastened on particular books with an avidity which made their contents then and there a part of his being, and the dates of his first aquaintance with them epochs in his life, and which even blocked his mind to the fact that other books of as great importance had been written, he never was a book-worm ; and, to the last, two, or at most three, hours of intense effort a day, instead of the usual six or eight hours of the professional man of letters, sufficed for his own literary labours. In youth, as in later life, he was a sociable and open-air intellect—out for walks in the fields, the streets, or whatever the neighbourhood was ; doing his thinking as he walked, or observingly taking in, when he was not too abstracted, the range and particulars of the landscape, the meteorology overhead, and the incidents, humours, and physiognomies that passed him.

The real cause of that extraordinary demeanour, which distinguished him from his fellow-students and made them look upon him as one possessed, was a mind not only incapable of taking things coolly or with any ordinary degree of youthful ardour, but even incapable of existing from day to day unless in a state of protracted ecstasy or whirlwind over some object of contemplation or other. Take him in any year of the four from his seven-

teenth to his twentieth, and you will find him contemplation-drunk. You may even ascertain, in any particular year, the theme or the set of themes that is holding him entranced. For one whole twelvemonth he was in a state of "mental elysium," as he afterwards described it, with the constant thought of the Infinity and Majesty of Godhead. Again it was Jonathan Edwards on Free Will that was in possession of him, and he was in a dogmatic frenzy of Necessitarianism. Anon there came the reading of Mirabaud's "System of Nature," and for a time, from the influence of that work, a cold wind of philosophic Atheism swept through the very mind that had lately been in such a rapture of natural Theism. Nor were the politics of the day absent from his thoughts. As the Revolution in France and the war with France passed on from stage to stage, and especially after there began to flash upon the world the new power of the young Bonaparte, of these things also was note taken, in the same passionate way, by the young St Andrews student.

Chalmers was licensed by the Presbytery of St Andrews on the 31st of July 1799, when he was nineteen years and four months old. For about two years he preached as little as could well be. The truth is, he was decidedly indifferent to the prospects of the clerical career, and was fascinated rather by the chance of obtaining in the course of a few years a mathematical or other professorship in

one of the Scottish Universities. With the idea of farther qualifying himself for the professorship he saw looming in the future, he spent two sessions in Edinburgh, attending, among other classes at the University, those of Playfair (mathematics), Robison (natural philosophy), Hope (chemistry), and Dugald Stewart (moral philosophy). He found less satisfaction in Stewart than he had expected to find, and, on the whole, thought he got more of his money's worth out of the other three. With Playfair he kept up or extended his mathematics—rising now, as I believe, into that transcendent admiration for Sir Isaac Newton which was thenceforward a permanent portion of his intellect. Without thinking very highly of the chemical professor, Hope, he found him a useful teacher; and he plunged, while attending him, into such a passion for chemistry on his own account, that that science remained thenceforth a rival with mathematics for his affections. But Robison was his favourite. To the end of his life he used to quote with enthusiasm certain doctrines and philosophical distinctions which he had first learnt from Robison; and, in counting up the academic teachers to whom he had been most indebted, he gave Robison the second place—Brown of St Andrews retaining the first, and Hunter of the same University ranking as third.

Though Scotland had still to wait a good while before she became acquainted with Chalmers or took notice of him—though, as it happened, he was

not one of those who were in their right places of power in very early youth, and it was ten or twelve years before the flashes which revealed him were seen over any considerable area—yet even in the year 1801-2 his "potentiality," as Johnson would have said, was almost complete. All that Chalmers was ever to be structurally he already was, I believe, at the age of twenty-one, with but one important exception—an exception immensely important, as it turned out, but about which few would then have cared much, if there are very many that would care a jot now.

From the year 1801-2 I overleap at once a period of twenty years. Alighting on his career again, about the year 1821-2, I find him then, in the full manhood of forty-two, in a position definite enough—the greatest pulpit orator, beyond all comparison, in Scotland, and with a fame, on this and other grounds, which had gone over the whole of Britain. The place of his residence, astir from week to week with the immediate excitement of his oratory, and proud of so far-famed and far-flashing a possession, was the city of Glasgow. In 1815, Chalmers, at the age of thirty-five, had, by the choice of the Town Council of Glasgow, become minister of the Tron parish in that city, containing a population of about 11,000 souls; and he remained in Glasgow till 1823, or eight years in all—for the first four (1815-1819) as minister of this Tron parish, and for the last four (1819-1823) as minister

of a new parish, called St John's, formed almost expressly on his account in the poorest part of the city, and containing a population of over 10,000 persons, mostly of the operative class. Within a few months after his arrival in Glasgow the degree of D.D. had been conferred on him by the University of the city, so that from 1816 to his death he was known as Dr Chalmers—the additional honours conferred upon him from time to time, such as the corresponding membership of the French Institute in 1834, and the degree of D.C.L. from the University of Oxford in 1835, making no difference in his designation. I have chosen the year 1821-2, when he was in the middle of his incumbency in St John's parish, and when Edward Irving was his assistant there, as the particular year in which to observe him; but I shall range over the whole eight years of his Glasgow popularity.

Pages could be filled with extracts giving accounts of oratory, and the extraordinary scenes which the Tron Church or St John's Church presented on Sundays, and sometimes on week-days, when he preached—the space crammed to oversurging with the habitual congregation, and with Glasgow merchants, students, and other casual visitors mingled with it; the breathless attention from the first; the increasing agitation of soul and nerve in the vast audience as the discourse went on, and the preacher, after one paragraph in which it seemed that voice, gesture, and the power of thought impassioned had

done their utmost, only recoiled to be "at it again" in another paragraph swelling to a burst still more tremendous, beyond which again there was yet paragraph after paragraph of frenzy overtopping frenzy, till at last, nerve and soul over-wrought by such a succession of thrills, there would be the break-down of numbers in tears, or some would start up uncontrollably, or there would run through the entire multitude a simultaneous sigh, or all but cry, of relief. This, and all the rest of it, may be read over and over again in contemporaneous accounts, notably Lockhart's, in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk.*

The oratory of Chalmers, while always massively and originally intellectual, was somehow of universal fitness; it took effect alike on rich and poor, on cultured and on uncultured hearers. In this respect there was then a contrast between him and his assistant, Edward Irving, the full magnificence of whose oratory was not revealed till a year or two later, when it took London by storm, but who was already known as a man of strange genius and a noble coadjutor to Chalmers both in the parish and the pulpit of St John's. Once, I remember, Chalmers, referring to this contrast between himself and Irving at the time when they stood thus related to each other, expressed it, in his manly way, in some such manner as this: "There seem to be two kinds of attraction possessed and exercised by men. Some work upon their fellows by a general kind of power, like the attraction of gravitation—they affect univer-

sally; they draw things of all sorts to them—bricks, stones, or anything. Others affect by a more special kind of power, like the attraction of magnetism; they don't draw all things to them indiscriminately, but only certain things that are in peculiar affinity with them—the steel and iron, you know. Edward Irving in Glasgow was a man attracting in this magnetic way. This kind of attraction is very powerful, and will beat the other sometimes. I remember one old woman in a red cloak, who used to sit on the pulpit stairs of St John's church. When I preached she was pleased enough, poor body; but I was nothing to her compared with Irving. She adored *him*. I have no doubt she got something out of Irving that I could not give her. Do you know, I think that old woman in the red cloak was magnetically related to Irving."

Although Chalmers did not positively cite himself as an example of one exercising the more general power of attraction, it was clear that he implied this.[1]

[1] I find that, as usual, this notion of the two kinds of attraction among men was one which Chalmers carried about with him ready-made. In a small volume of privately printed recollections of Dr Chalmers, Wilberforce, and others, by Joseph John Gurney, the eminent banker, there is an account of a conversation in 1830, in which, Irving having been mentioned, Chalmers said, "When Irving was associated with me in Glasgow he did not attract a large congregation; but he completely attached to himself and to his ministry a limited number of persons with whose minds his own was in affinity. I have often observed this effect produced by men whose habits of thinking and feeling are peculiar or eccentric. They possess a *magnetic* attraction for minds assimilated to their own." Gurney having expressed his opinion that this kind of eccentric influence might be dangerous in religion, Chalmers replied, "Yes, truly—after all, *gravitation* is much better than *magnetism*." This is very characteristic.

And it was true. Wherever he went, and whatever class of audiences he was addressing, he produced the same impression as upon the merchants and operatives of Glasgow. "I do not know what it is," said Jeffrey, after first hearing him in a speech at Edinburgh, in 1816, "but there is something altogether remarkable about that man: it reminds me more of what we read of as the effect of the eloquence of Demosthenes than anything I ever heard." Chalmers had by this time paid visits to London, and there had been there the same flocking to hear him, and the same extraordinary *furor* in high circles about his preaching, that afterwards attended Irving. How on earth his English audiences got over the bruising barbarism of his pronunciation is a mystery; but it is evident they did, and so easily as to have left hardly so much allusion to that particular as was to be expected in the records of these London visits. "All the world wild about Chalmers," says Wilberforce, in his Diary, in May 1817; and again, under date Sunday 25th, "Off early with Canning, Huskisson, and Lord Binning to the Scotch Church, London Wall, to hear Dr Chalmers. Vast crowds—Bobus Smith, Lords Elgin, Harrowby, etc. I was surprised to see how Canning was affected; at times he was quite melted into tears." About the same time Sir James Mackintosh writes—"Canning told me that he was entirely converted to admiration of Chalmers; so is Bobus, whose conversion is thought the greatest

proof of victory." To others Canning is said to have declared that he had "never been so arrested by any oratory", and to have used the phrase about Chalmers, "the tartan beats us all." All which is here quoted for the behoof of a generation that has grown up since the time of Chalmers, and knows nothing about him and perhaps does not want to know anything, and to force upon them the fact that such a man did exist, and that, in his middle life, occupying the position of a famous Glasgow preacher, he had shown such transcendent qualities in that line, as to have risen far above all famous preachers in ordinary, and become a national celebrity even with men of intellect.

Let me now go back briefly so as to hint what had converted the young unknown Chalmers as we left him in 1801-2 into our present celebrated Chalmers of his middle life.

He had been hankering after a mathematical or other Scottish professorship. But it was not to be had; and, in 1803, when he was twenty-three years of age, he became minister of Kilmany, a quiet, agricultural parish of about 150 families, in his native county of Fife. He continued minister of this parish for twelve years, or until he was removed to Glasgow in 1815. If we could write fully the history of Chalmers at Kilmany during these twelve years, it would be an interesting history of a mind. For the fuller narrative the reader must go to Dr Hanna's pages; I can give but the broad facts.

For seven years out of the twelve, or from his twenty-fourth to his thirty-first year, Chalmers lived on in his little parish very much the same man that he had been before, though put into a manse and doing duty as a clergyman. People round about knew him as still the massive half-crazed enthusiast in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Political Economy, and what not—every now and then taking up some new study, and working at it for a time with a passion that excluded everything else; but, as a parish clergyman, taking things easy. He would be away lecturing on Mathematics or Chemistry at St Andrews or at Cupar; there would be strange rumours in consequence of his having betaken himself to the dreadful new science, Geology, and having actually used these words in one of his lectures:—"The writings of Moses do not fix the antiquity of the globe; if they fix anything at all, it is only the antiquity of the species." His parishioners, meeting him on the roads, would sometimes have a hearty jocose greeting from him, but at other times would see him lost in some abstraction, and would gaze after him, not knowing what to make of this "minister" of theirs. He would go to their houses when sent for, and he had a hurried house-to-house scamper among them once a year, which he called a "visitation"; but, on the whole, they saw little of him except on Sundays, and then it would sometimes happen that, when he took off his hat before going to the pulpit, strings

of green stuff, which he had been gathering that morning as botanical specimens, would be hanging from his hair.

His study was but little on the Bible. Sometimes he would prepare a sermon into which, from his own interest in the subject, he would throw all his powers ; and there is proof that on such occasions he blazed out in his little country church with bursts of oratory which fully foretold the future, and were so out of proportion to the habits or expectations of the rustics that they would be agape with wonder for a week. For example, Bonaparte and the chances of a French invasion of Britain being in all men's thoughts, and Chalmers, as usual, having meditated on this subject till he was as one possessed by it, and having moreover in his fever of martial ardour became chaplain and lieutenant in a local volunteer corps, this is the sort of language that was heard from the Kilmany pulpit: "May that day when Bonaparte ascends the throne of Britain be the last of *my* existence ; may *I* be the first to ascend the scaffold he erects to extinguish the worth and spirit of the country ; may *my* blood mingle with the blood of patriots ; and may I die at the foot of that altar on which British independence is to be the victim." Amazingly out of proportion this, no doubt — for Bonaparte would have had other things to do than send for the minister of Kilmany in particular and order his execution ! But this excess of personal passion about events is

according to the true genius of the orator; and, had the conquest occurred, I do not doubt that Chalmers *would* have gone about Fifeshire as a raging outlaw, and that they would have had to hunt him down and kill him.

But, though there would be outbursts of this kind in the Kilmany pulpit, generally on secular subjects, Chalmers's usual addresses to his congregation were, in form, either but sermons hastily scribbled in shorthand on the Saturday evening or Sunday morning, or such fervid chats over the pulpit as he could muster without even this amount of preparation. In matter, save when there would come in a touch of some sublimer contemplations from his natural theology—they were either such mere advices to his parishioners to be decent, honest, and manly, as befitted a system of hearty parochial ethics, or expositions of Christian doctrine to them after the most moderate and rational interpretation of Christianity then known in Scotland. In other words, he was known as a "Moderate," and as belonging to that party of the Scottish clergy who, under the name of "Moderates," were then greatly in the majority, and whose theology—after a historical, and perhaps a metaphysical, postulate or two, which did entitle it to be called Christian—gave little farther trouble to the intelligence of the community. After this interpretation of the Christian faith Chalmers was honestly enough a clergyman, and a man of genius among his fellows

of the same theology. But, in truth, he cared little about being a clergyman or a pulpit orator at all; and it was on the great world of science and speculation, with a longing for the opportunity that would transfer him into it, that he kept looking out from his manse in Kilmany.

But in the life of Chalmers there was the phenomenon of a great shock or transfiguration midway. No otherwise can it be described; it would not be worth while to *try* to describe it otherwise. The time was the year 1810-11, after he had been seven years in Kilmany. He had been going on as before—the great-brained, intellectual enthusiast. Authorship seeming now to him to afford a means of expression for his teeming thoughts which might serve in lieu of the denied professorship, he had followed up his first anonymous publication, *Observations on a Passage in Mr Playfair's Letter to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh relative to the Mathematical Pretensions of the Scottish clergy*, with a treatise of larger scope, published in London, and entitled, *Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources.* It was a discussion of the state of Britain as affected by Bonaparte's measures for the destruction of her foreign trade, and a declaration in general of views which Chalmers had formed on various questions of political economy and politics. He had also undertaken to contribute to the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, edited by Brewster, and had bespoken, in par-

ticular, the two articles (characteristic conjunction!) "Trigonometry" and "Christianity."

The bespeaking of this last indicated a certain new craving of his mind towards he hardly knew what. But he came to know. First, deaths around him of relatives and friends, and then a prostrating illness that brought himself to death's door, and shut him up for a whole year in the seclusion of his own thoughts, brought on the change. To express it briefly, Chalmers came out of his sick-room a convert to that "Evangelical" form of Christian Theology which he had formerly repudiated, and a convert so convinced that he was prepared to announce the change not only in the article on Christianity which he had undertaken to write, but in his whole future walk and conversation. Into the very centre of his mind, through all the mathematics and all the big scientific speculations that had been long tumbling in it, there had somehow penetrated those few Pauline ideas, expressed in words that have been long commonplace in the world, which we read of as having given peace to St Augustine, to Luther, and to many other remarkable men in different lands and ages.

And what a marvel it was for the parishioners of Kilmany when their minister came once more among them out of his solitude! The man was transfigured. In the pulpit now not the old careless bursts of anything that came, or the splendid prepared harangue on some half-secular topic, but

O, such new phrases about Christ and His love for men—such yearnings of a soul in earnest over his flock—such wrestlings with them to get them to go with him! And then, on week-days, such a going about among them, and dropping into their houses to speak with them, and urging them to this and that, and care for their habits, and promoting of schools and associations, and, with the same rich heartiness and abundance of jest and humour as before, something strange and saint-like! And far beyond Kilmany, among clergy and laity, the rumour ran that Chalmers had become one of the Highflyers. At first there was surprise, and, perhaps, something like sneering in some quarters; but the genius of the man remained, and was not to be denied or withstood, and Highflying, as represented in Chalmers, became a phenomenon of larger look and importance to the region round about him than it had been before.

From the year 1815, when he removed to Glasgow, on through all the stages of his subsequent career, there accompanied Chalmers a kind of constant recollection in the public mind that he had not been always the same man that he was, but had, at a particular period, changed sides rather abruptly in the theology and ecclesiastical politics of his country, —gone over from the "Moderates" to the "Evangelicals," and disturbed the balance by his weight. Conscious as he was of this universal recollection respecting him, he let it take its own course. It

would have been an indescribable horror to him to flaunt the personal argument of his own "change" before the public eye after the coarse method of some religionists. As much as possible he abstained from the topic; and to the end, even while engaged in controversy with the Moderate party, he would be warm in his acknowledgments of the many manly virtues he had found in the old Moderate school. On the other hand, it was to the credit of his ecclesiastical opponents that, except on one memorable occasion, they, as a rule, chivalrously forbore, in their contests with him, from the use of an argument so calculated for effect in debate—the argument that he himself had not always been of his present opinions.

We can see now, I think, what was the sort of constitution, and what the prior mental history, that lay behind the orator in Chalmers, and that gave to his pulpit-oratory its unparalleled power and fame during the time of his residence in Glasgow. In those great days of his preaching, as during the rest of his life whenever and wherever he preached, it was as a preacher of the "Evangelical" school that he was known, and more particularly as an Evangelical preacher whose theology was describable as of the Scottish variety of Calvinism. To administer to the minds of men, without rational abatement or doubt, those inmost and most peculiar doctrines of a popular Gospel, the recognition of which had made so great a revolution in himself; to have no trust, as

regarded either the improvement of the individual or the real civilization of the world, in anything short of the central change that would be caused by the passionate embrace of these doctrines; to avow the great end of all his labours to be, in the common phrase of all Evangelical preachers, "the winning of souls to Christ"; not to be ashamed of such phrases in the pulpit or in his serious intercourse with men elsewhere, but to use them as true, good, and warm with a vital meaning—to these habits, and to this employment of a genius that had once looked forward to any other employment of itself rather than this, had the unseen powers that manipulate the spirits of men brought Chalmers in his middle life.

But while, as names go, it is not to misname Chalmers to say that he was, in the modern and popular sense, a great "Evangelical" preacher and parish minister, nothing is more certain to me than that those who should form an idea of him as such from commoner samples of the species would wholly misconstrue him. He did, simple-minded man that he was, relate himself to past and contemporary teachers of Evangelical Theology as his nearest intellectual kindred; his Christian reading was much in that peculiar religious literature of which the writings of some of the Puritan divines are the older examples, and books like Wilberforce's *Practical Christianity* the more recent; nay, he would see "the root of the matter" in much more obscure

performances that came in his way, and his correspondence is full of respectful references to theological tracts and treatises which he would have found trashy if he had not found them pious. But, as to the degree of his affinity with those multitudinous kinsmen of his, he was, partly through modesty, under a delusion. As distinct as were Chalmers's physiognomy and figure from those of other eminent preachers, so distinct was the Evangelicalism of Chalmers from any precedent or contemporary instance.

In Chalmers, by reason of the great natural dimensions of his mind, there was—his firm acceptance of the peculiar doctrines of Evangelical Christianity always assumed and recollected—less of the action of a complex traditional Theology in his thoughts than might have been expected from his position. Through his preaching, Calvinistic in the main as it might have been described in respect of doctrine, there were to be seen, recognisable by Calvinists and anti-Calvinists alike, great spaces of the immeasurable uncobwebbed heaven. Nay more, through all the days of his preaching he was amongst the most liberal of ecclesiastics, and the most anxious that both his own independence of mind and the Christian world generally should be preserved from the spirit of a dictatorial orthodoxy. "I am not sure," he once wrote, "whether there is not too much of a sensitive alarm about one's orthodoxy when it is expected that something like a satisfying

declaration of it shall be brought forward in every single discourse. Might not a preacher and his hearers so understand each other as that the leading points of doctrine might be tacitly pre-supposed between them?"

Accordingly, while at Glasgow, he by no means thought himself bound to take that common plan of preaching which he used afterwards satirically to describe as trying in every sermon to "take a lift of all theology." He ranged about considerably, and, in addition to many sermons of purely spiritual appeal or exposition, broke out now and then in sermons of such direct and practical application of Christianity to affairs as astonished weaker evangelical minds. His *Commercial Discourses*, as they came afterwards to be called, were a conspicuous proof that the Glasgow merchants and operatives had greatly mistaken the nature of his Evangelicalism if they expected that he would always confine himself to points of faith, and would never make any of them writhe under denunciations of their special forms of immorality, hypocrisy, and roguery. All through life he kept this largeness of method in his Evangelicalism, this liberty of grappling human nature towards the good and noble by any efficient means, while believing the Gospel to be the great means.

Again, so far as Chalmers did in his preaching assume the habitual theology of his country, and employ himself heartily in its exposition, he im-

ported into his treatment of it such peculiar intellectual methods learnt among the sciences, such a stock of notions derived from them, such an already acquired interest in various speculations and researches not within the usual ken of the clergy, and, moreover, an imagination so rich and inventive, that he affected that theology more than he or others thought, and did not leave it altogether as he found it. In other words, the Evangelicalism of Chalmers formed a stage in the religious history of Scotland. That movement in the Church of Scotland which led to the gradual relinquishment of the "Moderatism" of the eighteenth century, and to the ascendancy at last, about the time of the Reform Bill, of a popular "Evangelicalism" among the clergy, had, it is true, been in progress before Chalmers went over to the "Evangelicals," and was already provided with able chiefs and leaders. But, from the moment that he joined it, his became the leading *intellectual* influence; it was from him, more than from any one else, that the progressive party derived its adaptations to contemporary exigencies and ideas, and its new forms of phraseology. Hence a certain character of its own about the Scottish Evangelical movement during Chalmers's life, distinguishing it, perhaps, from the contemporary Evangelical movement in the English Church—a peculiarity of character depending on the accident, if we may so call it, that the movement had come to be led, not by a hard and shrewd

ecclesiastic, not by an accomplished scholar, not by a simple religious enthusiast, but by one who had been brought unexpectedly to the work from a prior course of ardour in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, and Political Economy, and who, but for the change that had befallen him, would still have been labouring breast-deep in a philosophy compounded of the speculations of these sciences.

To Geology, for example, and consequently to the notion that the current interpretation of the Book of Genesis might have to be modified, Chalmers remained loyal throughout his life. He did not, indeed, go far in the reconciliation of Theology with Science which he thought necessary at this point—not so far, I believe, as he would have gone now, had he been alive. But he went beyond the theological opinion of his day; and his authority helped to make Scottish orthodoxy less timid in that direction at least than it might otherwise have been. And what he did on the frontier between Geology and Theology was a type of much of his activity both as a preacher and as a writer. Retaining as he did an eager interest in the sciences, and a reverent and exulting sympathy with those who were labouring in them and filling their minds with their high generalizations, he longed to demonstrate that Christianity need not lose these men, that it could only be by mismanagement and misunderstanding if it did lose them. Hence, in addition to his expositions of Christianity for the poor

and ignorant, he was ever after some attempt or other for the recommendation of Christianity to the higher and more cultivated intelligence of the time.

These attempts commonly took the form of "reconciliations" of Theology with Science—of arguments, with all the strength of one who thought he knew both, to bring them into harmony. Of this kind was his treatise, "The Evidences and Authority of the Christian Revelation", originally published in 1813, and afterwards expanded and modified. Of this kind also were his famous "Astronomical Discourses", delivered as a week-day course of lectures in Glasgow in 1816, and which, after holding that city in a state of intellectual excitement for a year, ran through the country in edition after edition to the extent of 20,000 copies, dividing attention with Scott's early novels, and moving men like Canning, Foster, Mackintosh, and Hazlitt, to outcries of admiration.

CHAPTER III

DR CHALMERS—HIS LIFE AND OPINIONS
(continued)

When Chalmers left Glasgow in 1823, it was to the surprise of the public. It was, I may add, to the astonishment and consternation of his parishioners. What! give up his unparalleled position in Glasgow —that great city which he had swung round bodily from Moderatism to Evangelicalism by his preaching —in order to go into the retirement of a professor's chair in St Andrews? A Moral Philosophy professorship! What was philosophy, moral or of any other sort, that a preacher of the Gospel—but, above all, a Chalmers—should shunt himself off in the middle of his ministry into such a miserable, half-heathen siding? But Chalmers had reasons by which he justified the step to himself. It was not solely that he had become sick, body and soul, of the bustle and fatigue attendant on his monstrous popularity in Glasgow—"a popularity", as he had himself described it, "more oppressive than gratifying; a popularity of stare and pressure and animal heat, and a whole tribe of other annoyances which it brings around its unfortunate victim; a popularity which rifles home of its sweets, and, by

elevating a man above his fellows, places him in a region of desolation, where the intimacies of human fellowship are unfelt, and where he stands a conspicuous mark for the shafts of malice and envy and detraction." He could have borne up, doubtless, against the fatigues of even such a popularity for the sake of the opportunities of better influence which he knew to be involved in it. But his old longing for a quiet academic life had come back upon him, not merely with the old sense that such a life would be congenial to him in many ways, but with a conviction that at least a temporary retirement into such a life was necessary for the right ordering and knitting-up of his mind at the stage at which it had arrived. In the bustle of such a life as he had been leading in Glasgow, anything like a systematic reckoning with himself had been impossible. He had come to feel this, and to long for some situation of comparative repose, in which his mind might settle upon itself, come to an understanding with itself on points that had been reserved, and so deepen and extend its ideas by fresh ruminations that something like a completed intellectual system might be the result. Hence it was that he accepted the Moral Philosophy professorship at St Andrews.

To a great extent his purpose was realized. In the venerable quiet of the little town which he knew so well, amid the scenes and memories of his youth, and in the cheerful society of not a few of his old

friends, he was able to carry out a very characteristic plan of procedure on which he had resolved. Chalmers had at this time prescribed to himself a course of reading both in the works and in the biographies of certain select men of different lands and times, towards whom he felt an attraction either of affinity and admiration, or at least of curiosity. As to the particular readings in St Andrews, beyond Leibnitz and Tacitus, I am left to conjecture. Omitting Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Scott, and some other English classics in prose and verse, to whom he paid his respects from time to time, and omitting also books of practical piety, casual theological treatises, and works of physical science or of current information, I find that among the authors of a more speculative order whom he had read, wholly or in part, about this time, were some of the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century. Of German writers or German speculation he knew nothing—with the single far-back exception of Leibnitz, whom he had got at through the Latin or the French ; and this defect of German (which, however, he shared with most of his countrymen of that day) was a great pity for him eventually, though it made things easier at the time.

But Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, Condorcet, and other French writers of the same period, were familiar to him. There is a passage in which, speaking of Voltaire and Rousseau in language which shows how well he knew them, it is clear

that, on the whole, he had the profounder feeling for Rousseau. Naturally, however, it was among British philosophical authors that he was most at home, and especially among those whom he might regard as his predecessors in those tracks of speculation over which he had to go in his class. Of Greek he knew little more than of German, and he had dim ideas of what had been done by Plato and Aristotle, and the schoolmen of the middle ages. For him the history of true Philosophy began with Bacon: to be a Baconian was to be intellectually sound. After Bacon, Samuel Clarke and Butler were great names in his books—Butler positively, Clarke rather negatively. Then, of course, for him, as for every one else over Europe undertaking a course of speculative thought, Hume furnished a necessary point of departure. Chalmers, while going back upon Hume for himself, made it his business not the less to become acquainted with the intermediate course of Scottish or English speculation on subjects which Hume had discussed. Hence readings or re-readings in Reid, Campbell, Adam Smith, and Dugald Stewart, and, with especial relish, in the English Paley. It so happened, however, that, just about the time when Chalmers went to St Andrews, a new book appeared which made a great sensation in the philosophical world. This was Dr Thomas Brown's "Lectures on the Human Mind," published from his manuscripts after his death in 1820. Chalmers had come in for the effect

of Brown's fame at its fullest. He betook himself admiringly to Brown as the Benjamin among British metaphysicians.

Whether by the assimilation of opinions from other minds, or by conflict with them, Chalmers did contrive, during his five years at St Andrews, to form for himself some such connected system of his views as that which he had desired to form, and with which he proposed, thenceforth, to walk through the world. The results were partly manifested in the courses of lectures which he delivered to his students—lectures so different from anything that had been heard from the Moral Philosophy chair in St Andrews before, that the attendance in the class-room was doubled, and those five years of Dr Chalmers's tenure of the chair are remembered yet as a period of golden mark in the annals both of the University and the town. In these courses of lectures Chalmers voluntarily abandoned the practice, which had then become general in the Scottish Universities, of making the chair of Moral Philosophy a chair of universal Psychology or Mental Science generally. He reverted, as Adam Smith had done in similar circumstances, to the stricter view of the duties of the chair which regarded it as a chair of Moral Science proper, or Ethical Science; and he followed Adam Smith farther in considering that a full course of Moral Philosophy in this stricter sense might include not only an exposition of the theory of right and wrong, but also the principles of

Jurisprudence, Political Economy, and Natural Theology. But much of what he had elaborated, or begun to elaborate, in St Andrews, was carried with him to Edinburgh, and served as the stock for whatever farther speculations occupied him during the remaining nineteen years of his life.

When I first knew Edinburgh, one of the great attractions of its University was the class-room of Dr Chalmers, called the Divinity Hall. It was on the right of the quadrangle, immediately after entering through the portico from the street, and the access to it was by a narrow flight of stone stairs leading to a kind of stone-gallery looking upon the quadrangle. In this stone-gallery, or about the portico and quadrangle, would be lounging at an early hour in the forenoon, waiting the doctor's arrival, the members of his audience. They were mostly young Scotsmen of from eighteen to five-and-twenty, destined for the Scottish Kirk; but there was a considerable sprinkling of young Irish Presbyterians, together with a group of oldish military officers, who, after their service in India or elsewhere, had settled for the quiet evenings of their lives in Edinburgh, and, partly to while away the time, partly from a creditable interest in theological matters awakened at last in their grizzled noddles, had taken to attend Dr Chalmers's lectures. Occasionally there would be a stranger or two of distinction.

Punctually a few minutes before the hour the

Doctor would arrive among the gathered groups expecting him. His manner on arriving was generally hurried and absent, and he disappeared at once into his vestry or ante-room, there to put on his gown, and his little white Geneva bands, a pair of which he usually kept in an odd brown-covered old volume of Leibnitz that lay handy for the purpose on a side-table. Sometimes one or two of the strangers would follow the Doctor into the vestry to bid him good morning before lecture, but he did not like the intrusion. Meanwhile, the doors of the Hall having been opened, the audience had entered and filled it. It was more like a dingy ill-contrived little chapel than a class-room, having a gallery raised on iron pillars over the back rows of seats so as to darken them, and a pulpit opposite this gallery rising to a level with it. The students, properly so called, the number of whom was from 100 to 130, occupied the seats below, clear of and under the gallery; and in the comparatively empty gallery, not much noticed by the Doctor, who generally looked downwards to his students, sat the strangers of distinction and the military veterans.

Emerging from the vestry by its private entrance into the Hall, the Doctor, now in his gown and bands, still rather hurried and absent-looking, mounted the pulpit, a sight for any physiognomist to see. Then generally, after a very brief prayer, which he read from a slip of paper, but in such a

way that you could hardly detect he was reading, the business of the hour began. Not unfrequently, however, it would turn out that he had forgotten something, and, muttering some hasty intimation to that effect instead of the expected first words of his prayer—once, I am told, it was this surprising communication, delivered with both his thumbs up to his mouth, "My artificial teeth have gone wrong"—he would descend again from the pulpit and go back to his vestry. On such occasions it was a chance if he did not come upon one or two late-comers availing themselves of that quiet means of entrance, engaged while they did so in the interesting process of measuring their heads with his by furtively examining and trying on his vast hat.

Suppose all right, however, and the lecture begun. It was a perfectly unique performance—every lecture a revelation, though within so small and dingy a chapel, of all that the world at large had come to wonder at in Chalmers. For the most part he sat and read, either from his manuscript or from some of his printed books, from which he had a most dexterous art of helping himself to relevant passages —sat and read, however, with such a growing excitement of voice and manner that whether he was reading or not reading was never thought of. But every now and then he would interrupt his reading, and, standing up, and catching off his spectacles so that they hung from his little finger, he would interject, with much gesticulation, and

sometimes with a flushing of the face, and an audible stamping of the foot, some little passage of extempore exposition or outburst. No one lecture passed in which the class was not again and again agitated by one of those nervous shocks which came from Chalmers's oratory whenever and about whatsoever he spoke in other public places. Clamours of applause had, indeed, become habitual in the class-room; and as, in spite of their apparent indecorousness in such a place, they were justifiable by the audience on the plain principle, "If you lecture like that, then we must listen like this", he had been obliged to let them occur. Only at the natural moments, however, would he tolerate such interruptions. He was sensitive to even a whisper at other times, and kept all imperiously hushed by an authority that did not need to assert itself.

To describe the *matter* of his lectures would be more difficult than to give an idea of their form. It was called Theology, and there certainly was a due attempt to go over the topics of a theological course, with frequent references to Butler, Paley, Jonathan Edwards, the *Theologiæ Elenchticæ* of Turretin, and, by way of general text-book, to Dr George Hill's Lectures in Divinity. But really it was a course of Chalmers himself, and of Chalmers in all his characters. Within two or three consecutive sessions, if not in one, every listener was sure to be led so completely and with so much commotion through the whole round of

Chalmers's favourite ideas, that, if he remained ignorant of any one of them or unsaturated with some tincture of them all, it could only be because he was a miracle of impassiveness. But through all and over all was the influence of a nature morally so great that by no array and exposition of its ideas, repeated never so often, could it be exhausted, and by no inventory of them represented. Merely to look at him day after day was a liberal education.

Are Dr Chalmers's works now read? They are still bought, I should suppose, and placed on the shelves in certain quarters where the memory of him lasts; but they are less read or looked into now than it might have once been expected that they would be. I, who so cherish his memory, have but one stray volume of them in my possession. Why is this? Partly the reason is a general one. Who *is* read, in these days, after his own day is past? Perhaps the most perishable of writings are those of that oratorical order to which Chalmers's mainly belonged. They are addressed to moods and emergencies, and moods and emergencies pass away. Vehemence is their characteristic, and the continued gesture of vehemence, after the occasion for it is out of sight, offends rather than pleases. Far beyond oratory in general, the oratory of Chalmers did, as I believe, possess qualities entitling it to notice as an addition to the literature of his time. If it is part of the business of the student of litera-

ture to take account of any influx into the general stream that has a colour of originality, even should that originality be a little uncouth and Scythian, then I should regard the omission of Dr Chalmers's writings from a survey of the British literature of the first half of the present century as a very considerable oversight.

There was always substance in what Chalmers spoke or wrote; nothing that he spoke or wrote but was the result of real cogitation; no mind was more incapable of commonplace even for an instant, or moved more habitually on the wheels of generalizations. If the presence of important thought in oratory is what gives it literary value, then on this ground there might be far worse reading for leisure hours even now than the writings of Chalmers. Add the abundant illustrations of a rich imagination, and no small amount of the miscellaneous variations that give pleasure in literature—here some memorable felicity of phrase; there a stroke of humour; again a touch of pathos; anon a blaze of indignation so vivid that you see the scowl and the flush on the writer's face; nay, sometimes (what passes all else in effect, and comes but from the spirits of the rarest) a sudden tone, high, solemn, and indescribable, as from listening to the song of the archangels before the throne.

And yet with all this there are drawbacks sufficient to explain why it should be that the interest in Chalmers's writings and the attention now given to

them should be far less than might seem due to the worth of the living man. In proportion to the success with which a man of his stamp may have exerted himself while alive may sometimes be the inattention of his admirers to his literary remains after his death. He may have expounded his ideas so well, may have so worked them into the very fibre of those about him, that they at least do not require to read his writings after his death, or, if they do read them, feel no rousing of novelty, but only a sense of going over beaten ground. As an effective expositor of his ideas in discourse from the pulpit or the chair I have never known any one comparable to Chalmers. He went at his point again and again; he iterated and reiterated; he illustrated the thing first this way and then that, the thing itself remaining the same for a whole hour; his grand figure of speech was repetition. He would rather nauseate the few, he used himself to say, than not gain the intelligence of the many.

But what of the larger public to whom the knowledge of him might come fresh for the first time even now through these writings? Well, for the more fastidious among them, that habit of iteration and reiteration which made Chalmers so resistless as an expositor of his ideas to general audiences must interfere, in most of his writings, with the sense of sweetness, calmness, and quiet artistic evolution which makes continuous reading pleasant. In Chalmers all is above-board; reading him is

like being belaboured with a meaning through many pages, rather than being quietly presented with it in one paragraph and invited on to something else. For those cultured readers whose judgments determine what is classic in literature, there can be no doubt that the result of a casual reading in Chalmers must so often be fatigue that he will have but small benefit from their suffrages. He had not himself that varied scholarship or culture that might have sown his writings with the learned little metonymies that enrich the pages of some authors. And, connected with all else that was characteristic in him, was the peculiarity of his style. It was a style thoroughly self-made, splendidly mechanized for his purposes, and with a logical accuracy of texture, amid all its strength and passion, that will bear very close inspection; but it was very far from being a classic style. It was really a kind of Scythian style—a style which might be described as the English of the eighteenth century first made tempestuous and then again ruled into cadence by the energy of a new intellect that was at once vehement and methodical.

Chalmers was, on the whole, a moderate Conservative in politics. All his life a free-trader and advocate for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and a zealous advocate also for Catholic Emancipation when many Conservatives stood out against it, he had yet no liking for the Reform Bill, and would have preferred a measure rectifying some of the

abuses of the old system without inculcating so much trust in mere extension of the suffrage. But this was not from a want of belief in the virtues and capabilities of the great body of the people, or from a habit of under-estimating their importance in the commonwealth. On the contrary, as the thoughts and labours of his own life were, from first to last, chiefly with them, and for them, and among them, so he believed that the true progress of any society would show itself, and would even consist, in a progressive increase of comfort in the condition of this its largest number. The greatest happiness of the greatest number was as constantly in his mind as the paramount object of all aspiration and all statesmanship, as it was in the mind of Bentham.

Moreover, he firmly believed in the possibility of a great progress in this respect. "There will, I prophesy," he said, "if the world is to stand, there will be a great amelioration in the life of general humanity. The labouring classes are destined to attain a far more secure place of comfort and independence in the commonwealth than they have ever yet occupied." Now, as he was a firm Malthusian—as resolute a believer as Malthus himself, or as John Stuart Mill, in the truth of the Malthusian law, and as merciless a denouncer of the utter futility of all schemes of philanthropy that ignored that law—this prediction amounted to a declaration that he expected a

time when, along with whatever increase might be effected by improved science and improved industry in the general resources, there should be the spectacle of a labouring population that had learnt to keep its own numbers well within the limits of these resources. Emigration, changes in the representative system, free-trade itself, money votes for relief on a large scale in times of distress, and all possible improvements in the system of taxation—including one favourite project of his own for the "commutation of all taxes into a territorial impost", all these he regarded only as so many palliatives, or rests to take breath, while the great lesson of permanent social well-being should be learnt. "There is no other way of achieving a better economical condition", he repeated over and over again, "than by means of a more advantageous proportion between the food of the country and the number of its inhabitants."

In his ideal of a happy country we always see Chalmers fancying a population all the less numerous, provided that each individual had elbow-room and a certain amount of leisure, rather than a population swarming up to the utmost possibility of mere life on a given extent of surface, and in which, consequently, while the highest should have great fortunes, the lowest strata of life should be but as vermin.

But it was not to the direct preaching of the Malthusian principle, nor to such compulsory exactions of obedience to it as some have proposed,

that Chalmers looked for the accomplishment of the great amelioration. "There is no other way", he said, "of securing this proportion (the more advantageous proportion of the food of a country to the number of its inhabitants) than by the growth of prudence and principle among the inhabitants themselves. It will be the aggregate effect of a higher taste, a higher intelligence, and, above all, a widespread Christianity, through the mass of the population." Here also Chalmers, with only slight variations, used the very formula of all his brother-Malthusians. *They* speak of the permanent attainment by the labouring-classes of a higher standard of enjoyment as the only true economical consummation, and *he* would have accepted their phrase as equivalent to his own. He differed from most of them only in his notion of the means by which this consummation was to be reached. That all legislation should be unswervingly in accordance with the Malthusian principle seemed to him as essential as that architecture should be in accordance with the laws of pressure and of the strength of materials; but direct enactments that the Malthusian principle should be obeyed under penalties were not to his taste.

There was one great matter, indeed, in which he thought that the blundering legislation of centuries had already involved most of Britain in such a coil of complicated evil, that only by a vigorous exercise

of legislation, directly undoing its own work, could there be recovery for a fair start. This was the matter of the Poor Laws. He abominated the Poor Laws. All the adjectives of horror and reprobation in the dictionary brought together could not express the vehemence of his loathing of the Poor Laws. The principle, in force in England since the time of Elizabeth, of the legal right of paupers to be supported out of rates levied compulsorily from the rest of the community, seemed to him a principle perfectly diabolic in its action, and almost the one down-dragging encumbrance of a great and glorious nation. The abolition of the Poor Laws where they were established, and the security of any territory where they were not established against the invasion of so foul and pestiferous an influence, seemed to him the *sine quâ non* of a fair start towards social prosperity.

The thorough Christianization and education of the whole people—this, then, which was Chalmers's supreme desire for other reasons than the economical, was also that one prescription of his for the economic well-being of society to which he made all his notions of political remedy subservient. But he did not believe in the possibility of any efficient process of this kind from the operation of the mere voluntary principle, or principle of supply meeting demand. He drew a philosophical distinction between the class of cases where this principle

may be relied on for the doing of all that is necessary, and the class of cases where it may not. Where the supply of bread, or beef, or any such material necessary to life, is short, this shortness of supply, he argued, will cause a corresponding anxiety to obtain more of the article; but it is different with spiritual commodities. Where they are concerned the law is reversed, so that, wherever the supply of knowledge or education is least, precisely there the demand for it is also least. Hence, he concluded, a correct theory of politics should dictate a very different amount of central action, or action by the State, in the spiritual and intellectual concerns of the community from that requisite in the concerns of its trade or commerce. In this last order of concerns the minimum of Government action, consistent with the securing of freedom to all, was the thing desirable; but not so in the other order of concerns. To an extent that till of late would have placed him in direct opposition to the prevailing current of opinion, Chalmers was an advocate for the necessity of State action, and of a generous expenditure of public money, in behalf of popular education, and of all high intellectual ends.

Chalmers was one of the most strenuous advocates of his age for a national or endowed Church, and also for a system of national schools, supported partly, but not wholly, by state-endowments. Though no man had taxed the voluntary principle more than he, or had made it yield more largely,

and though he was of opinion that, in the absence of State aid, there might be organizations by which Voluntaryism might be made to do wonders, yet, to the end, he did not believe in the sufficiency of Voluntaryism. As to the question of the particular Church to be endowed and made the national Church in any country, he was, within the bounds of his notion of anything like sound Christianity, as liberal as possible. For his own nation, such a Presbyterian Church as that which had seemed to suit her best, but this, if possible, so broadened as to include and win back all forms of Evangelical Dissent; for England, a continuation, in like manner, of that Episcopal Church which accorded with her character and traditions, but this, also, if he might venture to make a suggestion on such a subject, broadened to recover the English Non-conformists, and not kept apart from other Churches by any doctrine of exclusive apostolicism. Of course, liberal as Chalmers was, as far as his religious beliefs permitted him to be, in this matter of the Church of the Future, it would be possible to be more broad and liberal still in perfect accordance with the policy of his principle.

So much for Chalmers's views in general outline. But what was the precise mechanism on which he relied? Here his views summed themselves up in one formula, which was almost the formula of his entire practical life—the incomparable excellence and the absolute sufficiency of the Parochial System.

The division of the country at the last stage into small manageable districts, called parishes, each with its church-going bell, and its due apparatus of schools and the like—this simple territorial division which had come down from time immemorial in Christian lands seemed to him the very perfection of invention for both spiritual and economical ends. Only because the parochial system had been suffered, in consequence of the great increase of population in modern times and the growth of large towns, to shrink miserably within the limits of national requirements, instead of being kept in constant repair according to the rate of these requirements, had its efficacy passed out of sight.

Chalmers's own idea of a manageable parish was that it should never contain more than 2000 souls; and, surveying Britain with this measure in his hand, he found its existing parochial system monstrously out of accord with the perfect image of the system. The two parishes in Glasgow in which he was himself successively minister consisted each of between 10,000 and 12,000 souls; and from them, and from surveys of the states of large towns generally, he collected those terrible statistics as to the extent to which population had outgrown all the existing means of education, whether religious or secular, with which he appalled his contemporaries, and which, after serving him as arguments for church-extension, have been handed on to our day. But such was his faith in the parochial system that

he believed, on first coming to Glasgow from his quiet little country parish of Kilmany, that by zealous and proper arrangements even the largest city parish might be grasped and managed by the same mechanism that worked an agricultural parish so easily. To the demonstration of this he consecrated an amazing amount of energy during his eight years in Glasgow.

His first principle was the superiority of the aggressive over the attractive in the work of Christianization. His notion was that, in a great parish the immense majority of the population of which consisted of the poor and outcast, the parish church ought to be a home mission, going out upon the people and offering them instruction rather than waiting for them to come and ask it. He himself undertook and accomplished, in each of his Glasgow parishes, by systematic daily instalments, a house-to-house visitation of all its families. Then, with a staff of efficient assistants, he entered upon the more thorough work of which these surveys by himself were but the general announcement. Here again his principle was subdivision—the confining of the care of each working assistant to a definitely mapped-out locality, including a certain number of families and no more.

What Chalmers achieved in this way for the spiritual tillage and supervision of his two Glasgow parishes of the Tron and St John's—in particular, what new week-day schools he erected, bringing a

good education at a cheap rate within the reach of the poorest children among his respectable parishioners, and what a machinery of Sunday schools he set a-going for those who were still left out—may be read in the records of his Glasgow life. There also may be read in detail how in these parishes, but more especially in that of St John's, where circumstances enabled him to carry out his experiment more thoroughly and independently, he persevered in managing the pauperism within his bounds entirely on his parochial system for the administration of voluntary benevolence, and without the least assistance from a poor-rate. As early as the year 1814, he had ascertained that, whereas all the pauperism in his small parish of Kilmany was properly provided for by a sum £24 annually out of the voluntary offerings at the church door, the pauperism of an English parish of exactly the same dimensions, and as nearly as possible in the same circumstances, but managed on the poor-rate system, cost £1260. He had then concluded that this might be about the measure of the difference of expense between the two systems. His experience in Glasgow corresponded. By that exact and peculiar inspection of every individual case of alleged pauperism which his plan of the minute subdivision of his parish permitted, it was found that the number of the real cases of pauperism requiring relief was enormously reduced with great reflex benefit to the moral tone and industry of families who would

otherwise have succumbed to the temptation of alms, while of the real cases that remained so many were provided for by a little easy ingenuity in finding work, or by an appeal to the proper feeling of better off relations, that a mere fraction of the money accruing from the voluntary collections at the church doors sufficed in the last resource for the inevitable residue.

What Chalmers exulted in, however, was not so much the greatly-reduced cost at which pauperism could be managed by voluntary benevolence on the parochial system, with as much real comfort to the recipients of charity as under the other system. He exulted more in the restoration of his parish by his method to a healthy moral state, in which benevolence, and the family affections, and prudence, and a wholesome dread of dependence were again doing their proper work, and there was a sweetening of the relations between different classes of society. His agents for the economical management of his parish, the inspection and investigation of the cases of pauperism, and the distribution of alms when necessary, formed a distinct body from that which assisted him in the spiritual charge of his parish, though the two bodies co-operated. They were called by him his deacons ; and he ascertained that when once his system was in working order, the time required by a deacon for the most painstaking discharge of his duties among the poor averaged only three hours a month. Chalmers's experiment

in the management of the poor of St John's, conducted as it was amid incredulity, and under the severest scrutiny of advocates of the contrary system, used to be cited by himself to the last as a positive demonstration of the soundness of his views of pauperism, and of the possibility of averting from Scotland the curse of the English poor-law system. His organization of St John's parish remained in force eighteen years after his removal from Glasgow, but then sank under the encroachments of the adverse surrounding element.

With this sketch of Chalmers's views and efforts on social and economical questions I have mingled no criticism. There are, I may add, points at which I can see that criticism might be usefully applied. But, on the whole, taken as a combination of the sound and noble in moral dynamics with the expert and exact in moral mechanics, I fancy that Chalmers's system of social views may still be worthy of study.

CHAPTER IV

AN ACADEMIC TRIO—DR DAVID WELSH, "CHRISTOPHER NORTH," SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

One of Chalmers's colleagues in the Theological Faculty of the University was Dr David Welsh, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, of whom there remains a fine and high, if not a wide, memory among his countrymen, and most justly so. At the time of which I speak, Welsh was forty-six or forty-seven years of age. He was a thin, spare, weak-chested man, of middle height, or less, with a delicately blond complexion and scanty light hair, a finely-shaped head of the erect type, a grave expression of countenance, and a peculiar habit of knitting his brows and corrugating his eye-lids as he spoke, but very capable of a kindly laugh, which ran over his face like a gleam, and was accompanied by a flash of his upper teeth. His appearance, and especially his narrow chest, indicated precarious health; and indeed it was known that from his youth he had given signs of pulmonary weakness, and that more recently he had been warned of heart-disease. He hardly trusted at all to extempore discourse, and in any attempt of the kind hesitated and stammered, and kept up a dry clearing

of his throat, and prolonging of syllable after syllable, that would have been painful but for his always hitting on something right and emphatic at last. In reading there was not of course this painful hesitation; and the labour which the act of sufficiently loud speaking then cost him only imparted a sense of his conscientious earnestness, and sometimes an effect as of eloquence. Welsh had been appointed to the Church-History chair in the year 1831, having been before that minister for several years of one of the parishes of Glasgow, and before that again minister of the retired country parish of Crossmichael in Kirkcudbrightshire.

The most notable portion of Welsh's life, and that on account of which many who might have cared little for his clerical quality would have looked at him with interest, had been the ten years of his youth, from 1810 to 1820, before he had been appointed to Crossmichael parish. During these ten years he had been on terms of the most familiar friendship with Dr Thomas Brown, the metaphysician. He had first seen Brown in the winter of 1809-10, when Brown for the second time did temporary duty for Dugald Stewart in the Moral Philosophy class in Edinburgh University. Welsh was then a lad of sixteen, up in Edinburgh from his native Dumfriesshire to attend the classes, and with a particularly keen taste for logical and philosophical studies. Brown at once captivated him. He was one of those, of whom there were

many, that so much relished Brown's new, brilliant, analytical style of metaphysics as to be almost sorry when Stewart resumed duty, and proportionately glad when, in the following session, Brown was formally appointed colleague to Stewart, thenceforward to do the whole work, while Stewart lived on as a sleeping partner.

Would not the day of Stewart and his sober metaphysics of the old school be over, and was not the era of a new and more daringly Whig metaphysics about to begin? Such were the expectations of many ardent young men about Edinburgh, in what happened, at any rate, to be the great comet year, 1811. An eminent surviving friend of Welsh remembers how, going then as a boy in the evenings to see young Welsh in his lodgings and receive lessons from him, he used, in passing through George Square, to look up with never-ceasing wonder at the great shining meteor taking up such a space in the heavens. By that time Welsh had attained the desire of his heart in becoming privately acquainted with Brown; and, during the remainder of Brown's life, Welsh, gradually advancing from the stage of a student of Divinity to that of a licensed preacher or probationer of the Scottish Kirk, was continually in the company of the brilliant metaphysician. Every other evening, when in Edinburgh, he would be one of the family-party around Brown's tea-table, hearing his cheerful talk with his mother and sisters,

and so much one of them as to be consulted even about those poems which Brown published in succession about this time, and read before publication to none out of his own household.

When Brown died of consumption at Brompton, in April, 1820, at the age of forty-two, his friend was but a youth of six-and-twenty, a probationer of the Scottish Kirk, whose sole appearances in any character of his own had been in a few stray writings for periodicals. His real outfit for the future was his enthusiasm for Brown, and the reputation which descended to him of having been Brown's friend. These he carried with him, in 1821, to the parish of Crossmichael, but he had at the same time a strong interest in phrenology, as then taken up and expounded in Edinburgh by Messrs George and Andrew Combe. In phrenology he had begun to discern the promise of a science that should corroborate some of Brown's psychological speculations, and even lend a new method for the study of the human mind.

Of a family in which the strong Scottish form of piety was hereditary, and being also sincerely "Evangelical" in his views of Christian theology, Welsh was able, in his parish of Crossmichael, to combine, to an extent that might have been thought difficult beforehand, the character of a zealous and devout pastor of "Evangelical" sentiments with that of a worshipping disciple of Brown's philosophy and a seeker after light even in the new

cerebral physiology of Gall and the Combes. He was known also, generally, as a young clergyman of scholarly tastes, and more fastidious than usual in his efforts after a classical English style. Of his intellectual and literary qualities the public had the means of judging when he published, in 1825, that biography of Brown which had for some time been expected from him. The book is really a very good specimen of philosophical or literary biography, not in any way rich or striking, but careful, dignified, affectionate, and conveying a sufficiently distinct image of Brown personally.

Welsh had been but three or four years in Glasgow, to which he had removed from Crossmichael, when the Church-History chair in Edinburgh fell vacant. The Melbourne ministry, on the strong recommendation of Chalmers, appointed Welsh to the chair. Jeffrey, in announcing the appointment to Chalmers, stated that it had been made expressly in deference to his wishes; but on other grounds it was such an appointment as a Whig ministry might have been expected to make. Welsh was, and remained to the last, an advanced Whig in politics.

During the eight or nine years of Welsh's professorship which had elapsed before I knew him, he had devoted himself most conscientiously to the duties of the post, laying aside preaching and all other work for the proper study of ecclesiastical history, and going to reside for a season in Bonn that he

might acquire the mastery of German necessary for the easy use of the materials in that language. He had, in fact, completed a course of lectures, presenting, in three parts, a consecutive view of Church History as far as the Reformation. The first part extended to the period of Constantine, the second thence to the end of the thirteenth century, and the third thence to the Reformation inclusive. It had become his plan to repeat these parts of his course in cycle, so that students attending him for three years in succession would hear the whole.

When I had first the pleasure of listening to him, he was in the last or Reformation portion of his course. It was a very painstaking, and, in the main, very delightful and even stirring narrative—not certainly from the most Catholic point of view, but from the point of view of a liberal and warm-hearted Evangelical Presbyterian—of the European religious movement of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. After Wycliffe, Huss and the Bohemians, and others, we came upon the great German group with Luther in the midst, and we finished off, if I remember rightly, with a touch of Zwingli and the Swiss and French prolongation as far as Calvin. He was best on the Germans, or the Germans suited us best, and he brought out Luther, as we all thought, in beautiful relief. In the other two portions of his general cycle I do not think that he was nearly so interesting. My recollection at least of his Church History of the first three centuries is singularly hazy

and featureless. The early heresies and the Gnostics came into this part of the course, and I remember being bold enough at the time to pass this criticism on his account of the Gnostics that it was as if he had gone to the top of a tower, we looking up to him, and, there ripping open a pillow, had shaken out all the feathers, and let them descend upon us, calling down to us to observe them for these were the Gnostics.

In connexion with none of the courses of lectures delivered in the University could the *pros* and *cons* of the Scottish professorial system be better discussed than in connexion with Welsh's course on Church History. So far as it was a narrative or survey (and it was mainly of this character) there can be no doubt that it only performed for the students the kind of service which they might more naturally, and with better effects of self-discipline, have performed for themselves by suitable reading under directions. Perhaps even there was a danger that, as recipients through the ear, in such easy circumstances, of a complete tale of Church History prepared for them by their Professor, the majority of the students might go away with a permanently too meagre conception of the real dimensions of the study. But, on the other hand, there was a fitness in the method pursued to the requirements of the place and occasion. Here at least was the presentation to the audience of a medley or panorama of impressions, anecdotes, figures of men and general-

ized visions of events, well worth having at the time, and sure to fructify usefully in the mind afterwards.

There must have been many a man whose knowledge of Church History consists in little more than a recollection of the names of Wycliffe, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Zisca, and Reuchlin, and Erasmus, and Luther, and Melanchthon, and Œcolampadius, and Zuinglius, and Calvin, and Bullinger, and Bucer, as they used to be pronounced so fondly in often repeated series by Welsh's labouring voice, and who is yet better and larger-horizoned by reason of that recollection. And only conceive practically the consequences of an attempt to work, with seventy or a hundred young men together, the method of learning Church History by right reading for themselves. Conceive so many young men turned loose simultaneously among the libraries of Edinburgh in a competitive hunt after the folios and quartos in which the precious lore is treasured. The library-system of the place or of any place would break down under the pressure. There would be a famine among the copies of Origen, and Fleury, and Fabricius, and a fighting for odd volumes of the "Acta Sanctorum." Of course, however, such a raid as has been supposed among original sources of information is purely imaginary, and the process would resolve itself into an importation into the town at particular seasons of a sufficient number of text-books. But while Welsh's

course did not exclude the use of text-books, and rather led to the use of them, it was, in itself, at least a larger text-book, and, by means of examination, it was made to answer as such.

Add to all this the effect upon some of first knowing of such a study as Church History and forming some notion of what it might be, not through a dead text-book, but through the daily sight of one who, after his type, was a living Church-historian. In many ways there came from Welsh a fine interfusion of personal characteristics with the substance of his readings. Not unfrequently we saw him stirred with the full emotion of his subject, and were stirred contagiously. Methinks I hear him yet as, with excited breath and with something of the old spirit of a Dumfriesshire Covenanter trembling through his weak frame, he quoted, or rather ground out through his teeth, after one narrative of bloody religous tyranny, the prayer of Milton's sonnet—

> "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
> Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old
> When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones."

More habitually, however, he sat before us in the aspect of an inquirer of liberal and philosophical temperament, trying always to be accurate, candid, and just. A certain classic taste in style, also, with a liking for an apt Latin quotation now and then, helped us to a sense of literary finish, while in his half-stuttered advices to us individually we had

experience not only of his kindliness and shrewdness, but of a sort of clear Attic wit rare among the Scotch.

In the last years of his life, which were the years immediately following those of my first aquaintance with him, Welsh was brought out, by the compulsion of events, from his previously rather recluse and valetudinarian habits. When the Non-Intrusion controversy in the Scottish Kirk was approaching the foreseen catastrophe, who so fit to be brought forward into a chief place in the drama that was to be acted as this much-respected professor of Church History, whose Whig sympathies had all along gone heartily with the movement, and who had indeed always had a share in its private counsels? Accordingly, in 1842, and in the view of what was coming, they made him Moderator of the General Assembly of the Kirk. As Moderator of that year's Assembly it fell to him still to occupy the chair at the opening of the next or Disruption Assembly in May, 1843; and on him, therefore, it devolved to act the leading part in what may be called the ceremonial of the Disruption.

It was Welsh that, immediately after the gathering of the members of the Assembly and before the first business had begun, read the protest by which he and those who might adhere to him declared their reasons for quitting it and the establishment which it represented. It was Welsh who, then turning round to the Royal Commissioner on the throne behind him, bowed his solemn leave, and,

taking up his hat, walked out of the Assembly, followed close by Chalmers, and leading that procession of ministers and elders which, forming itself in George Street, made its way through the gazing and acclaiming multitudes of Edinburgh to the hall, some half a mile distant, where it had been agreed to constitute the Free Church of Scotland. In this public ceremonial, and in the subsequent proceedings in opening the new Assembly, Welsh, roused by the emotion of the occasion far above his usual hesitation of manner and unreadiness in speech, acquitted himself with much dignity, so that those who have an interest in recollecting those Edinburgh events of May 1843, as in a Scottish historical picture, can think of his spare figure and grave light-haired look as fittingly and gracefully in the midst.

Welsh did not long survive this, the most conspicuous public appearance of his life. To fall back completely, after it, into his former recluse habits was impossible. In addition to the Professorship of Church History in the New or Free Church College, for which he had necessarily exchanged his chair in the University, he had a good deal of public work to do in connexion with the schemes and arrangements of the newly-founded institution. There came also, to occupy a part of his time very suitably, the editorship of the *North British Review*, then started, with the co-operation of Chalmers, as an organ of liberal literature in which Scottish

theology should not be unrepresented. It must have been on some visit of his to London, in 1844, on the business of this periodical, that, chancing then to be in town, I had my last interview with him but one, and dined with him at his hotel in Cockspur Street. He was then in fair health and good spirits, and full of hopes of the new *Review*. The next time I saw him was in his house in Edinburgh, to which he was confined by medical orders. The heart-disease of which he had received previous warnings had declared itself fatally, leaving him but a residue of days to be counted one by one before the last spasm. Out of his own family, one of the last to see him was his old friend Dr Andrew Combe, himself an invalid, who had been kept alive almost miraculously for many years by care and regimen through an equally fatal disease, and whom all that knew him remember as one of the most serene, upright, and naturally pious of men, rendered only more thoughtful of others by the long patience of his own nearness to death. This interview must, I think, have been at Helensburgh on the Clyde, whither Welsh had been removed, and where he died, April 24, 1845.

John Wilson in his class-room, as Professor of Moral Philosophy, was one of the shows of Edinburgh. Though he was called by the Arts Students "the Professor," *par excellence*, there was gathered round him, for them and others about the college,

the accumulated interest of all that he had been and done non-professorially. Those early and almost legendary days of his were remembered when, as an extraordinary gipsy-genius from the Lakes and Oxford, of whom men had begun to talk, he threw himself so furiously into *Blackwood* and Scottish Toryism; and there was the fresher remembrance of his continued outflashings and savageries in the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," and of his many other feats, some of them unprofessorial enough, during his actual tenure of the Professorship since he had succeeded Brown in 1820. It was "Christopher North" that the students saw and adored, though they called him "the Professor." How they did cheer and adore him! In his class there was constant cheering of him on the least opportunity, especially by the juveniles of his audience, and yet with a kind of wondering respect for his reputation, voice, and magnificent appearance, which kept the acclamation always distinct from disorder, and left the full sway really in his hands.

As far as ever I could ascertain, it was nothing that could in any conventional sense be called a systematic course of Moral Philosophy that Wilson administered to his students, but a rich poetico-philosophic medley in all the styles of Christopher North, with the speculative made to predominate as much as possible. His way was to come in from his ante-room with a large bundle of ragged papers of all sorts and sizes (many of them old folio letters,

with the postage marks and torn marks of the seals visible on them, and others, scraps of about the size of a visiting card), and, throwing these down on the desk before him, either to begin reading from them, or sometimes, having apparently failed to find what he wanted uppermost, and having also felt in vain in his waistcoat pockets for something likely to answer the purpose, to gaze wildly for a moment or two out at a side-window, and then, having caught some thread or hint from the Tron Church steeple, to begin evolving what seemed an extempore discourse.

The first time that I heard him, the effect of these preliminaries, and of his generally wild and yellow-haired appearance, so much stranger than anything I had been prepared for, almost overcame my gravity, and I had to conceal my face for some time behind a hat to recover sufficient composure to look at him steadily. The voice and mode of delivery were also singular. It was not so much reading or speaking as a kind of continuous musical chaunt, beginning in a low hollow tone, and swelling out wonderfully in passages of eloquence, but still always with a certain sepulchral quality in it—a moaning sough as of a wind from the tombs, partly blowing along and partly muffling the purely intellectual meaning. From my recollections of him, both on the first and on subsequent occasions, I should say that the chief peculiarities of his elocution, in addition to this main one, were, in the first place, a predominance of *u*

among his vowel-sounds, or a tendency of most of his other vowels, and especially the *o*, to pass more or less into one of the sounds of *u*; and, in the second place, the breaking up of his sentences in the act of uttering them by short pants or breathings, like *ugh!* interjected at intervals. Thus, in making the quotation from Ariosto: "O the great goodness of the knights of old!" he uttered it, or rather moaned it, nearly like this, "Oo—the great goodness—uf—the—knoights—uf—oold!" with a pause or breathing after almost every word; and, in speaking in one of his lectures of the endurance of remorse, and in illustrating this by the fancy of the state of mind of a criminal between his condemnation and his execution, he wound up, I remember distinctly, with a phrase uttered, as regards the longer interjected breathings, exactly thus: "Ay! and there may be a throb of remorse (*ugh!*) even at that last moment—when the head—tumbles—into the basket—of the executioner (*ugh!*)" the last *ugh!* being much the most emphatic.

Habitually eloquent, after a manner which these and other peculiarities rendered unlike the eloquence of any one else, Wilson was sometimes so deeply and suddenly moved by the feeling of what he was saying or describing that he rose to unusual heights of impassioned and poetical oratory. In particular, there were certain lectures, the time of the coming round of which was always duly known, when his class-room was crowded by professors and strangers

in addition to his students, in expectation of one of his great outbursts, and when amid those clapping their hands most enthusiastically along with the young ones, as the outburst came, would be seen Sir William Hamilton. This admiring appreciation by Sir William of the power of a colleague so different from himself ought to be cited in correction of a notion which the frequent descriptions and laudations of Wilson's physique, and the recollections of the sheer undisciplined tumultuousness of much of his writing, have naturally generated among those who have no personal reason to care for his memory. It is quite certain that Sir William thought his colleague a better Professor of Moral Philosophy for all essential purposes than a man of more regular powers could have been without Wilson's genius. And I have invariably heard from even the most hard-headed of any of Wilson's students whom I have questioned on the subject, the same assertion of their belief in the extraordinary efficiency of his class, and of their ceaseless thankfulness for having belonged to it.

Much more striking, however, than any traces of Christopher North's influence, recognizable among the modes of thought and speech current among the students of Edinburgh University, were the traces of another influence which it took some time to identify. Nothing surprised me more, at first, than the recurrence, in the talk of the students,

whenever two or three were conversing or arguing seriously, of certain clots and gobbets of a phraseology, and apparently of a philosophy, which seemed to belong to the place, but to which I was a stranger. "Induction," "Deduction," and "Syllogism," of course I knew, and I think, also "Subjective" and "Objective"; but "thinkable in space and time", "the Absolute", "the Laws of Thought as Thought", and the like, made me prick up my ears. Even then there was no need for being greatly put out, or being in a hurry to confess ignorance. A little waiting till the phrases were heard again in new contexts, and a little application of ordinary *nous*, sufficed for their interpretation. But when, grown bolder, I began to converse on the subject of these Edinburgh-University phrases with those whom I found to be masters of them, and to ask them to fish up for me more abstruse phrases from the same pool by way of puzzles, then, as "the Philosophy of the Unconditioned", or "the Relativity of Human Knowledge", or "the Phenomenology of Cognition", came up successively on the hook, my natural history failed me, and whether the thing were eel, flounder, or turbot, I was in doubt.

I was disposed to resent the troubling of the literary atmosphere with such uncouth terms and combinations, insisting, as I think the Fleet Street intellect still does, on the all-sufficiency of what is called "plain English" for the expression of whatever can be of any interest to man or beast. But

soon I perceived that in this I was taking the point of view rather of the beast than of the man, and that in the same spirit it might be allowed to a carter or coal-heaver, overhearing the words "hypotenuse," "parabola," "parameter," and "absciss" in the talk of mathematicians, to resent their occupation as humbug. For, the more I inquired, the more I found that it was because the notions were unfamiliar to me that the terms were perplexing, that there was not one of the terms of which a good account could not be given if once the notions were entertained, and that, when the notions were entertained, there was life in them, or at least exercise. I came to perceive that, while it was chiefly in the talk and the discussions of the inferior students that the raw clots and gobbets of the new phraseology floated publicly, the real meaning of the phraseology, and of the system of thought to which it appertained, was in quiet possession of indubitably the ablest young minds native to the University.

Nor was there any difficulty in knowing whence the powerful influence came. Every day I heard more of Sir William Hamilton, and what a man he had been to the University since his appointment to the Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics in 1836. Far less was then known of this great thinker by the world out of Edinburgh than has come to be known since; nor within Edinburgh was he yet estimated at his true dimensions. Since 1813, indeed, when he had settled in Edinburgh,

after his course at Oxford, nominally as a member of the Whig side of the Scottish bar, there had been a whispered reputation of his prodigious erudition, and of the profound nature of his speculations and studies. But in 1820 he had contested the Moral Philosophy chair unsuccessfully with Wilson; and not till after 1828, when articles of his had begun to appear in the *Edinburgh Review*, denouncing and breaking in upon the stagnation of all the higher forms of speculative philosophy in Great Britain, had the attention of German and French thinkers been drawn to him, leading to a more definite opinion of him at home.

On being appointed to the chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the mature age of forty-eight, he was at length, as all saw, in the right place; and it was certainly expected that from that place there would be some radiation or other of a speculative influence that would disturb the self-satisfaction of the Scotch in their last mixture, by way of a national philosophy, of Brown's Lectures and a dash of Phrenology with a residuum of Stewart and Reid, and that might also penetrate into England, and send a current through its mingling tides of Benthamism and Coleridgianism. But all that Hamilton was to be, and all the honour that was to come to the University of Edinburgh from its having possessed him, were not foreseen. It was not foreseen that to him, more than to any contemporary of his in Britain, would be traced a general

deepening and strengthening of the speculative mood of the land, by a timely recall to those real and ultimate contemplations the forsaking of which for any length of time together by the higher spirits of a nation always has been, and always will be, a cause of collective intellectual insolvency. It was not foreseen that by him more than by any other would there be a re-enthronement in the world of British speculation of the grand god, Difficulty, for whose worship alone need universities or great schools be kept up in a land, the constancy of whose worship there, in all the different departments of knowledge, is a land's glory, but the very look of whose visage in one or two departments had been forgotten even by professed thinkers like Whately. It was not foreseen that it would be by expositions and developments of Hamilton's Logic that English dignitaries of the Church would be earning themselves distinction, or that it would be on Hamilton's metaphysical doctrine of the Relativity of Human Knowledge that English theologians would be meeting avowedly as on a battle-ground, or that in the discussion of this same doctrine, with a view to affirm or confute it, would future English philosophers of the greatest non-theological celebrity be equally finding an inevitable part of their occupation.

While so much was unforeseen, however, the little student-world round the University quadrangle had already ascertained its own good fortune in pos-

sessing Hamilton among its teachers. When he was named or thought of, it was as the Kant or Aristotle of the place. And certainly, whatever influences were at work, there was no influence so recognisable as his. His grasp, his very finger-marks, if I may so say, were visible on the young minds that had passed through his teaching. It was among young Hamiltonians to a great extent that I found myself, and that I formed the new acquaintanceships that interested me most, some of which have ripened since then into most valued friendships. Owing to circumstances which I have never ceased to regret, I was unable to take the benefit of regular attendance on Hamilton's lectures for myself, and had to postpone any acquaintance with the matter of his teaching more intimate than that which could not but be conveyed to me indirectly, until there should be sufficient opportunity for me and others through his published writings.

But I cannot forget the appearance of his class when I casually did visit it to hear him lecture. As he went on distinctly and strongly with his *Primo*, *Secundo*, *Tertio*, advancing from division to division of his discourse, each sentence full of matter, and the matter unusual, and requiring, as it seemed, exertion to apprehend it, one could not but be struck with the fact that many of the auditors were far too young. But then, on looking at the names of distinguished students of previous years honourably blazoned on the wall behind the lecturer, and on

remembering students who had been in the class and had certainly not listened in vain, one could not but be aware that a busy emulation was at work among the benches of the auditors, leaving few absolutely unaffected; and that, where there did chance to be a young mind of due capacity, there was probably no one of the logical lectures from which it would not come away exercised and supplied as it could hardly have been in any hour elsewhere, and no one of the metaphysical lectures from which it would not come away glowing with some new conception extending the bounds of its ideal world.

Most evident of all was the power that lay, here as in other parts of the system of the University, in the fact of a personal leading exerted to the uttermost. It may hardly be known to those who never saw Hamilton, and whose knowledge of him is only by inference from his writings, what an impression of general massiveness and manliness of character was given by his very look, and what an equipment of passionate nature went to constitute the energy of his purely speculative reason. Calm as was his philosophic demeanour, clear and unclouded as he kept the sphere of abstract investigation or contemplation around him to the farthest range to which his reason could sweep, there was no man who carried in him a greater fund of rage or more of the spirit of a wrestler. Stories, perfectly authentic, are and were told of him, which invest

his character with an element almost of awe—as of the agony, relieving itself by paroxysms of prayer, into which he was thrown by the sense of his not being sufficiently prepared with lectures to meet his class in the first session after his appointment; or of the fright into which he once threw old David Irving, the Keeper of the Advocates' Library, when one of the rooms of the Library from which Sir William wanted a volume chanced to be locked by official orders, and David demurred about giving him the key; or of the vehement outbreaks of his temper occasionally even among his colleagues of the Senatus Academicus, when his language about individuals among them, or about the whole body if they stood in his way, would be very far from measured.

More patent to the public was the violence of his combats every now and then, on some topic or other, with any man or any class of men with whom he had taken it into his head to have the refreshment of a paper controversy. There were phrases of his which he had flung out on such occasions with tongue or pen—one of them being this dreadful one, "the brutal ignorance of the clergy"—that were among the favourite quotations of his admirers in the College quadrangle. In the calm bold face and powerful though not tall frame of Sir William, as he was to be seen any time after we had been talking of these things, there was no difficulty in recognising the sort of man from whom such manifestations of

passion might have come, and in whom there might be plenty more of the like, if more were called for.

Alas! within a year or two I was to see him physically a very different Sir William from what he was when this impression might have been most easily received from his appearance. Ere I left Edinburgh he was going about crippled by the paralysis which had suddenly killed one side of his noble frame, though it had left his great intellect utterly untouched. Year after year I was to hear of him, when I inquired, as still going about in this sadly crippled state, visibly ageing and ailing, and his hair grizzling and whitening from the brown which I remembered. But he was still carrying on his classes personally or by deputy, still reading or thinking night after night in his library, and now sending forth more actively than ever volumes in which, when he should be gone, some fragments of his soul should remain.

CHAPTER V

AN EDINBURGH BROTHERHOOD—AGOSTINO RUFFINI

My first acquaintanceships in Edinburgh, formed chiefly in and about the University, led to others of a more general kind; and after my student days in the University had ceased, I settled into the more familiar society of a pretty definite group of very dear friends. There was no external recognition of the fraternity, no approach to a club-organization. We simply liked to be together when we could, and, by various ways and means, *were* a good deal together. Now it would be the late evening chat and smoke of one or two of us—a kind of cabinet council for the rest—in the rooms of one in particular; now it would be a short afternoon stroll of one or two, or three or four, of us; at intervals it would be a dinner or supper, volunteered by one who had household facilities for such hospitality; and the largest development which the thing took was, once or twice in the year, a hotel-dinner at Granton, a fish-dinner at Newhaven, or a joint excursion for a day to the Pentlands, ending not unconvivially in some inn near Hunters' Tryst.

Agostino Ruffini was, I may say, the centre of the group. Its constituting principle was our

common affection for Ruffini. Whatever we were individually, or in other relations, we might, as a fraternity, have been called the Ruffinians. Whoever in Edinburgh knew Ruffini with the due degree of intimacy was actually or potentially one of us. "Or potentially" I say, for it has happened that persons who never chanced to meet each other within the bounds of any of those little gatherings which I have called more especially those of the fraternity, have afterwards, on coming together, at once felt themselves old friends, on the simple ground of their having both been friends of Ruffini. All the more strange was this because Ruffini sought no such influence, and was quite unconscious of the magnetism that made him such a bond of union. In truth, when I think of it now, I suspect that our attractedness towards him must have sometimes been a trouble to him, and that, on many an evening when we gave him our company or compelled him to be one of us, he would rather have been smoking his pipe by himself, reading his Dante, or, with his dark eyes fixed on the coals, pursuing the track of his own ruminations.

And who was this Ruffini? Writing now, I may make him at once less unknown to many by saying that he was a younger brother of the Giovanni Ruffini whose "Lorenzo Benoni," "Doctor Antonio," "Lavinia," and other stories, have shown us how beautifully an Italian, though not residing among us, may write English. Even before there was this

means of introducing my friend, it might have been enough, so far as a few were concerned, to say that he was one of that family of the Ruffinis of Genoa whose sufferings in the old days of Piedmontese despotism are matter of historical record. In Louis Blanc's "History of Ten Years" may be read a reference in particular to the tragical death of one of the brothers, the young Jacopo Ruffini, after the discovery of the design of a general Italian insurrection organized in 1833 by the "Young Italy" party, and which was to have its beginning in Piedmont.

But let me speak of Agostino Ruffini apart from such associations, and simply as he would have been recognised casually in Edinburgh in those days, before the apocalyptic '48, when insurrections and Italy were by no means such respectable things to the British imagination as they have become since. Well, to the casual view of Edinburgh in those days, he was a teacher of Italian. It was but a small effort of reasoning, however, to conclude, on seeing him, that such a man as he had not become a teacher of Italian in Edinburgh on the mere principle of voluntary tendency to the position of perfect felicity. To any one, therefore, who cared to inquire, it was not difficult to ascertain that he was a Genoese who had been driven into exile at an early age in consequence of some political turmoil in 1833 (no one pretended then to exact information about such events), and who, after

leading the life of a refugee in Switzerland, Paris, and London, had come to Edinburgh in 1840 to settle there at the age of about thirty. He had brought some introductions with him, and with such effect that, after living for a while in lodgings, he had pupils enough for his purpose, and found it convenient to become tenant of the upper part of a house in George Street, paying rent and taxes like an ordinary citizen. This house in George Street was his domicile during the whole time of his stay in Edinburgh after my acquaintance with him began. It was there that we used to drop in upon him in the evenings; it was thence that we lured him to join us elsewhere on any occasion we could devise; it was in virtue of the tendency of the footsteps and the thoughts of so many different persons thither that there was formed in Edinburgh what I have called the Ruffinian fraternity.

Ruffini was a man of middle height, of spare figure, slightly bent forward at the shoulders by sedentary habits, of the normal dark Italian complexion, and with features also Italian, but far from regular or handsome—the nose in particular blunted somewhat Socratically, but the brow full, and the eyes of a deep soft black. The general expression was grave, reserved, and gentle, with a possibility of sternness. Our northern climate and east winds told cruelly at times on his health and spirits; he was seldom long free from rheumatism or neuralgia, and was abnormally sensitive to malevolent ap-

proaching changes of weather. In all his personal habits he was scrupulously fastidious, conforming in every possible respect to English custom. Whether in his old dressing-gown, seated in the arm-chair in the plain attic room to which he confined his smoking, or as he walked out with his cane, or as he was to be seen in a drawing-room with other guests, his bearing was that of a quiet and perfectly-bred gentleman, who might have been mistaken for an Englishman but for his Italian face and accent, and a certain ease of courtesy which was also Italian.

So unwilling was he to take the benefit of any allowance for his being a foreigner, in favour of any points of demeanour differing from the standard of those among whom he was living, that he had tried to cure himself of the habit of gesticulating when he spoke. He had done this in a very characteristic way, by writing on the margins of the books he most frequently took up the words, "Ruffini, don't gesticulate." He had succeeded in a great measure, but not quite. He retained some little movements with his shoulders and a peculiar emphatic lifting of his forefinger to his cheek, which gave great point to what he said, and with which we would not willingly have parted.

He was, indeed, an Italian to the very soul. In the fact of his being an Italian, and so high and just a specimen of the race, lay the first and most general source of his impressiveness among us. He was sent among us by Providence, I may say,

to interest us in Italy, and to show us, in anticipation of the time when the knowledge might be of use to us, what manner of man a real Italian might be. Those were not the days of travel; and to most of us Italy was but a blurred continuation of the Italy of our classical readings. We thought of it as the long boot-like peninsula, still stretching into the Mediterranean and kicking Sicily as of yore—with the Alps still shutting it off on the north, and the Apennines still running as a seam down its middle; with vines, and olives, and what not, still growing on it, and a soft blue sky still overhanging it; nay, as we could not but also know, with a great quantity of rich mediæval and modern history engraven upon it over the traces of its earlier imperial history, and making it, almost alone of lands, a veritable and splendid palimpsest.

Well, it was as an uncommissioned and almost unconscious representative of this distant and dimly-conceived Italy that Ruffini appeared among us. We were exceptionally fortunate in *our* Italian. No average refugee was he, but one of Italy's best, finest, and gentlest—a man to be known on and on, ever more subtly and intimately, and yet never to be exhausted or known enough; to be found wise, true, honourable and good by even the most delicate tests that could be applied. Little wonder that Italy benefited at our hands from this happy chance that had sent him among us as her representative. We transferred our feeling for him to his country. We

took a new interest in Italian matters for his sake. We estimated the worth that there might still be in Italy by reference to him as a specimen of the kind of men she could produce; and our very measure of the inherent detestability of the existing political system in Italy was that it had ejected such a man and could not retain him as a citizen.

All this, however, was brought about quietly and without intention on his part. He appeared nowhere in Edinburgh in the character of a political refugee, nor did he ventilate any set of political opinions. He had ceased, I believe, to take any concern, even by correspondence, in the maintenance, in any practical form, of his country's question. He had accepted his own lot mournfully but philosophically; and his stay in Britain, and acquaintance with our manners and institutions, had imparted a shade of what might be called conservatism to the sum-total of his views on political subjects. To his neighbour-citizens he was simply a teacher of Italian; in society he was simply a cultivated, agreeable, but rather reserved Italian gentleman. It was among his private friends only—and, even among them, not in any formal way, but casually and from time to time—that he was led to talk freely and specifically of Italian matters, and of himself in connexion with them. Little by little, from an anecdote here, a sigh of suppressed reminiscence there, and sometimes a flash of fervid opinion elicited from him unexpectedly, we were able to piece to-

gether the story of his life, and to understand how he still felt in the matter of his country's state and prospects, while at the same time our knowledge of Italy became wonderfully more living and definite in consequence of these colloquies.

Of the crashing blow which fell on the family with the fatal "Young Italy" movement of 1833, and of the particular sequence which had involved himself along with his elder brothers, Ruffini never, or all but never, could be induced to speak. I do remember, but without being able to date or localize the incident, an anecdote which he told more for the sake of the oddity of the speech it contained than for any other reason. A bridge was to be taken somewhere. It was to be done by a band of insurgents, mostly young men, who knew little of the way in which to set about such a business, but who were led by an officer who had served under Napoleon. After some preliminary explanations, their commander thus addressed them: "As you are marching towards the bridge, they will fire at you. Never mind; you march on. They will fire again. You are not hit; you still march on. They will again fire, and you are wounded. Never mind; you march on. Again they will fire, and you are killed this time. Never mind; march on still." From the date of this incident, whenever it was, we were able more or less distinctly to follow Ruffini through the different stages of his exile—first in Switzerland and in Paris with the elder brother who was his

companion; then, when Louis-Philippe's government had become temporarily ungracious to the Italian emigration, in London with the same brother; and so, finally, here among ourselves in Edinburgh as we knew him. His brother, of whom he often spoke, and who was now the sole surviving one, was meanwhile back in Paris; and the thoughts of both reverted much to the widowed mother, still residing in Genoa, and able to communicate with her sons by indirect ways, but uncertain whether she should ever again behold them in life. We heard of the family-property near Genoa, as to the fate and management of which, and especially as to the annual report of the state of the olive-crop, there was good reason for anxiety. Owing to early associations, I suppose, these olive-grounds had retained a peculiarly strong hold of Ruffini's memory. Not only did the pale mist of olive-plantations always recur with peculiar fascination among his recollections of Italian scenery; he would dilate to us with mock gravity on the super-excellence of those olives of his affections over all other olives known or conceivable. Ah! those were olives, and those olives would never have justice done them till Italy was free! Reaching which phrase—"till Italy is free"—either through such banter, or through talk in a graver tone, he would, if questioned, be frank enough in expressing his thoughts on the theme so suggested.

In the main he had given up hope. A deep

despondency, natural to his temperament, had settled upon him in all his solitary ruminations as to the future of his country. Not that ever once his own duty, or that of all the Italians, was in the least doubtful to him. It was fine to see how, in the midst of his despondency, he would sometimes fire up in telling us any little story of recent Italian patriotism or valour. That his countrymen had fought, could fight, and would fight, was a fact which he had a pleasure in impressing upon us by instances, as if it was valuable to him for its own sake. Once, I remember, he spoke with particular satisfaction, purely on this ground, of the deeds of a certain Italian legion in South America led by a heroic refugee. Garibaldi was the name; but it faded from my recollection, till it was recovered in due time, and I found that my aquaintance with the name was of earlier date than that of most people about me. If Ruffini doubted, as I believe he did doubt, whether ever in his time the fighting-power of his countrymen would have a chance of trying itself on a sufficent scale for its own proper work, yet what should be done, if ever the chance did occur, was clear to him as the dome of heaven. "We must fight, fight, fight. If one whole generation of us should have to be swept away in the process, and Italy can then be free, it will be a good bargain; but take even that hope away, and it is still only by our deaths, for what is hopeless, by the deaths of a great many of us, that we Italians can

do the best that it is left for us to do." Such was Ruffini's formula, and very nearly in these words. As to the mode of an Italian war of independence—whether by popular insurrection, or by a military prince taking the lead and founding a dynasty—I do not think he cared much. He was singularly tolerant of all the varieties of speculative Italian patriotism, republican, monarchical, or theocratic. Perhaps the extreme distance of the result in his imagination had kept him from definite ideas, one way or another, as to the most probable means. One thing, however, I noted; and it became afterwards even plainer to me than it was or could have been then. Indeterminate as were Ruffini's views as to the mode and the desirable political shaping of an Italian revolution, should it ever be possible, the idea of the unity of Italy underlay in his mind the idea of her liberty and independence. The two ideas were not to be dissociated. Italy could not be thought of as free and independent except by being thought of as formed into one nation.

Though Ruffini personified to us Italy considered politically, it was by no means in this character only that we found him an acquisition to Edinburgh, the loss of which would leave a painful blank. He considered himself naturalized among us; and, apart from politics altogether, he brought to us a little treasure of acquired information and experience, which was all the more precious to us that a good deal of it was exotic.

"What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine."

So says an imaginary speaker in one of Browning's lyrics. Well, suppose an ingenuous North-Briton that has some such love, or an occasional moment of it, living in the metropolis of his own less classic land, and with no hope of ever seeing the object of his love with his bodily eyes. There is a castle close by in the town, to be sure, which, if not precipice-encurled, is mounted on a precipice; and there are gashes in the town, wind-grieved enough at times, especially when the wind is from the east. Nevertheless, there is a vacuum in the heart. Oh for that inaccessible valley in the Apennines! Well, as he cannot go to it, would it not be the next best thing if some one who knew the valley, some native of its neighbourhood, were to arrive by chance within his reach, and bring him authentic descriptions of it?

Something of this kind it was that Ruffini did for us in respect to the culture and literature of Italy. In his upper room in George Street what talks we had, which queries about this and that on our part converted into the daintiest and kindliest bits of instruction on his! I omit our occasional touches in common upon Latin writers. Here we had not so much to receive that was positively new. But in the history of Italian literature, whenever we chose to consult him, he was our ready Tiraboschi. He

irradiated for us many a matter respecting which our preconceptions were hazy, and our direct book-information deficient. He it was who first made the great planet, Dante, swim properly into the ken of some of us. Macchiavelli was a favourite of his, and I have taken it on trust from him to this day that in that deep Italian brain, diabolic as it made itself appear popularly, there was an intrinsic soul of good. From him I first heard of Vico, and received such an inkling of the nature of the *Scienza Nuova* of that Neapolitan thinker as made me unsatisfied till I knew more of it. Among later Italian writers I remember with what peculiar interest he spoke of Leopardi, and how he excited my curiosity by a sketch of the strangely-sad life of that poet, and by showing me a volume of his poems to which was prefixed a portrait taken from his corpse, representing the dead head lying on a pillow, with its weary, wasted look, and the eyes closed.

While we thus stood to Ruffini chiefly in the relation of listeners and recipients so far as an Italian literature was concerned, and while, to a less extent, it was the same with respect to recent French literature (for his stay in Paris had made him familiar with much of the French literature of Louis-Philippe's reign of which only rumours had reached us, and he brought us interesting news, I remember, of Balzac, Alfred de Vigny, Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonians, Pierre Leroux,

and others), we had even more frequent enjoyment in meeting him on a footing of equality on common ground, and comparing conclusions and impressions with him on topics of English literature, or of current intellectual interest. Few Italians had so thoroughly mastered our idiom, or were so much at home among our great writers or the more select publications of the passing season. Here also the zest of his conversation arose perhaps in part from his being an Italian—from his importing into our colloquies a mode of thought which, though it must in the main have belonged to him individually, was in part to be attributed to his Italian nature.

He was not expansive, nor particularly fluent as a talker, but, on the contrary, terse and ready to be silent; and unless you were *tête-à-tête* with him, it was not the impetuosity of anything he said that struck you, but a certain character of wise and simple sententiousness, with frequently a turn of very fine humour. In no man's conversation that I have known did the movement of mind which intimate talk with one or two others excites end more usually in one of those deep little pools, mysteriously still, at the bottom of which, as the cause of the depth and the stillness, there is some compact and often-cogitated maxim of experimental wisdom. And the habit of mind which appeared in this characteristic was evident also in the nature of his tastes and preferences when the conversation ran on the books which we knew in common. Through it

he fastened on much that we should have neglected or passed by but for the certificate given to it by his liking and recommendation. Thus, while his admiration of Shakespeare was as free and transcendent as that of any Englishman, it would happen again and again that the phrases or the passages which he had brought away in his memory from his last solitary readings in Shakespeare, or which he had noted with a view to consult us as to some difficulty in the interpretation, were not such phrases and passages as were familiar to the public mouth, or likely ever to be so, but those in which he had detected some little profundity of philosophy, heretofore unnoticed, but the value of which could not be doubtful after his commentary. And, as he thus sometimes probed for us into the less-known parts of Shakespeare, so sometimes, among the publications of the day, a book would come into his way, his peculiar regard for which would at once accredit it to us, and predispose us to read it with proper expectation.

Among the books kept during one whole winter was a volume of Kant, to be taken up every now and then for regular study until he should have thoroughly digested it. Not only while he was thus engaged, but at other times, he was ready enough to enter on those discussions of extreme metaphysical or religious perplexity to which the talk of intimate friends, if they are serious with each other at all, ought surely to lead. At such times, it need hardly be said, speculations would be exchanged, and

expressions of conviction and of sentiment would fall from his lips, not of a nature to be divulged at random all round at midday from an Edinburgh house-top. It was in an upper room that we sat, well roofed in by ourselves for our fireside chat late into the winter's night; and only on stepping to the window and drawing aside the blind could we see the slopes of the city around and underneath, descending as a vast embankment or valley of darkness towards the north, with hundreds of lights irregularly twinkling in the gloom.

At the heart, however, of all our multiform liking for Ruffini on such various grounds as have yet been mentioned, and not only at the heart of all, but interfused through all as a warmer and subtler element of affection, was our experience of his singular efficiency in the character of a friend and counsellor in matters of personal concern. It was strange to see how, in a Scottish city, so many persons, the circumstances of whose lives were different enough from anything native to Italy, were drawn to this Italian, this alien, and found in him, far more than in each other, a confidant to whom they could entrust what was of deepest and most private interest to them.

What was it in him that fitted him so rarely for this delicate function? I am not sure but that here also part of his qualification lay in what might at first sight have appeared a *dis*qualification—his Italianism. If I were to think of the good ideal of a father-confessor—not as a wily professional, not as having

any drift of his own, not as seeking the office, but as having it thrust upon him, a good deal to his own discomfort, by a little circle of friends who had discovered his wisdom and worth in the office—then it would be of Ruffini that I should think. I can see him yet, sitting as it were in the midst of us, receiving our visits independently one after another. Each of us had something now and then to consult him about—both those who were settled in life, and his seniors or equals in age, and whose references to him would be about matters of a maturer family-kind, and those younger ones among us to whom a man of between thirty and forty might more naturally be a mentor.

What penetration he had; how he understood a case half-told; how gravely he would nod in silence for a time as he listened; and then how distinct the farther questioning, and how exact the judgment! And no feigning or flattery! He would wound, if necessary; he would use the scalpel; he would blame; there were times when he was purposely harsh—when, falling back on a little dissertation on some course of conduct, or way of thinking, the prevalence of which among men in general he had always marked for reprobation as weak or evil, he would give his patient to understand that he detected too much of that in the present instance. But, at other times, what tenderness in his treatment, what thoughtfulness in his sympathy, what anxiety to see the matter brought to a right issue, and, if it was

possible for him, what willingness to take personal trouble to that end, and to interpose by letter or personally!

In this way, I suppose, he was made the depositary of the confidences of many more people than could have been related to each other in any other way than through such common indebtedness to him. Each was sure of him, and that which was entrusted to Ruffini was safe under more than sacerdotal seal. Of course, in that little fraternity of which I have spoken as more particularly recognising each other as Ruffinians, there was so much of common acquaintance with each other's affairs that there was plenty of scope for free colloquy, still of a confidential kind, among all alike. We could banter each other in an esoteric way about this or that; we could criticise our neighbours, or absentees of our own set; we could relapse into that *deshabille* and *abandon* of ideas, humours and whimsies, which make gatherings of friends delightful, and in which it is wonderful to see what resources for chat and genuine fellowship there are away from the inventoried topics of politics and books. There was that in Ruffini which made him competent to fill a host's place even in these little revels of friendly sense and nonsense intermixed; and I can remember how gracefully he regulated them, and how, without speaking much himself, he would always keep up with what was going, and, by an anecdote, a pithy comment, a momentary phantasy

of humour, impart to the whole a flavour which was characteristic of his presence.

There is no family, or fraternity of friends, as every one knows, that has not its own little stock of phrases, proverbs, catch-words, images and bits of rhyme, invented within itself, and invested with associations which make them keen and full of meaning within the circle of the initiated, though out of that circle they might seem meaningless or common. Our Ruffinian fraternity in Edinburgh was no exception; and, of the phrases which went to and fro among us, there were not a few of which Ruffini was the real or putative father:—it happened, for example, that one of us had come into possession of an oriental ring, having an inscription on it, cut on an emerald, in characters which no one at hand could decipher. The German theologian, Tholuck, having come to Edinburgh on a visit, the ring was shown to him; whereupon it became known that the inscription was in Syriac, and might be interpreted "*This too will pass.*"

Here was a flash from the East for Ruffini! He appropriated the saying; we voted it to be his; and again and again it would come from him, in this or that fresh application, as an ultimate word of his philosophy. "This is your agony now, this your annoyance;" so we may expand what the Syriac sage meant: "grievous it is, and it cannot but occupy you; but you have had agonies and annoyances before this one, and where are they now?

Well, Time has not ceased to flow, and *this too will pass!*" Very Syriac comfort this, perhaps, but it suited Ruffini; nor, after his first appropriation of the aphorism, did it ever need to be expanded. The four words, "*This too will pass*," were sufficient in themselves.

Another saying which came to be proverbial among us, but which will not, I fear, become current in the world in the profound sense we gave to it, originated in one of our excursions to the Pentlands. One of us, who had taken his rod and fishing-tackle with him, persisted in fishing a pond in the hollow among the moors, while the rest strolled about hither and thither. Still, as we came back at intervals to the edge of the pond, there was our friend fishing assiduously, but with not a fish to show for his trouble. He was a most determined fisher, one of the most skilful fishers in Scotland; and he would, I believe, have been fishing to this very hour, but for a simple question put by Ruffini on perhaps our thirteenth visit to the water's edge, when the afternoon light was beginning to gather over the brown moors, and still there was no fish in the basket or on the bank. "How is it," Ruffini said aloud, after regarding the fisher for a while with unwearied benevolence,—"how is it that no fish are caught by Frank? Is it that there *are* no fish?" It had occurred to him that our friend might have been for some hours the victim of a hallucination, and that the pond might be destitute of what he was

soliciting from it so painfully. Laughed over at the time as a simplicity, the question was moralized by us afterwards into applications quite away from ponds among the Pentlands. Whenever we heard of any kind of labour that had been meritorious but fruitless, our question was stereotyped, "Is it because there *are* no fish?"

Yet another of these silly-sweet reminiscences. We were teasing Ruffini one evening in his own rooms on the subject of his bachelorship; and, after various forms of the nonsense, we tried him with a variety of one of Boswell's questions to Johnson. We supposed that a baby were brought to him, and that, by inexorable conditions, he was bound to take charge of it himself, and always to have it under his own eye in the room where we were sitting. "What would you do with it, Ruffini?" we asked. "Oh, I would put it in the coal-scuttle there, poor thing, and give it a pipe." Necessarily, Ruffini's imp-baby in the coal-scuttle was always after that a visionary presence in our colloquies; and to this day I cannot see a coal-scuttle of a particular shape without thinking how conveniently it would hold a baby that had learnt to smoke.

As visionary as the baby in the coal-scuttle was a certain great book which Ruffini would speak of with mock-mystery as containing everything conceivable among its contents, elaborated into the most perfect possible form, and which he used to call "My novel", or, more fully, "My novel, which I

am going to write." It was always spoken of, with utter confusion of tenses, as an achieved reality which had yet to come into existence. Were some person of eccentric character talked of, "Yes, he is a very strange character," Ruffini would say, "and I have put him in my novel which I am going to write." Did some discussion arise which it was desirable to stop, "Ah! you should see," would be Ruffini's way of stopping it, "how wonderfully that is all settled in my novel—my novel which I am going to write." And so on in other cases, till this *opus magnum* which existed somewhere, if its author could get at it, became our ideal repository of all historical knowledge, of all the philosophy, all the ethics, and all the poetry yet attainable in the world.

With many lonely hours, notwithstanding the frequency about him of so many attached friends, and with thoughts revolving in his mind in those hours which none of these friends could altogether penetrate or share, Ruffini had reconciled himself, as I have said, to the prospect of a residence in Edinburgh for the rest of his days. His lot, as an exile, had so far fallen not ill, and not a sign anywhere in the political sky augured the likelihood of a change. Accordingly, when, in 1847, I left Edinburgh, it was with no thought that there would be a farther break in the fraternity by the more important loss to it of Ruffini. From amid new scenes and associations in London my thoughts would still revert to him among the rest, as sitting

in the well-known upper room, or trudging along George Street with his cane, and, mayhap, if the weather were bad, and the cold moist winds were coming in mist up the Firth from the east, he would be shivering with the cruel usage, and twinged in body and in spirit. There would be an occasional letter from him, but in none anything significant of a change at hand for him or for Italy, unless one were inclined to prophesy rather wildly from certain liberal proceedings of the mild new Pope, Pio Nono.

But the year 1848 came, and that memorable moment in 1848 came, when, going down the Strand, I saw placards in the windows of the news-shops, "Abdication of Louis-Philippe"; and at the words the thrill ran through me which ran through thousands of others. And then there came the muffled roar of revolutions, and from every land in Europe a sound as of multitudes huzzahing and armies on the tramp; and one knew that an era had arrived of vicissitudes swifter than at the recent rate, and of mutual reckonings and revenges between peoples and governments. And in the midst, on the lovely Mediterranean land that interested one most, one saw the Italian populations all uprisen, the despots cowering white-faced at their palace gates, swearing constitutions or anything. And, wonder of wonders! one who had hitherto been a despot, the sombre Piedmontese king, coming forward like a man at the end of

his life, dashing his recreant past into oblivion, and, on some inspiration of God or of his better ambition, summoning the Italians to his standard, and throwing down his gauntlet to the Austrian. Some of the effects were homely enough—as, for example, when Italian exiles in our own cities broke up their little domiciles, and tended, by ones, twos, and threes, to the mother-land that had need of them, or would at least receive them now if they came.

And this effect enacted itself, with more of public attention than usual, in the case of one refugee in Edinburgh. There came a day when there was a sale of Ruffini's furniture, and the tradespeople with whom he had had dealings bought little articles of the furniture as mementoes of him, and he prepared to take leave of the streets, and of the friends that for eight years had been fond of him. And so, between his leave-taking of our common friends in Edinburgh and his crossing the channel for Italy, I had two or three days of him in London. We passed a day together at Windsor, which he had never seen; and I remember that, on passing one of the red-coated sentries at a gateway leading up to the Castle, he looked round at the man ruefully, and spoke with envy of his drilled faculty, and the knack he must have with his musket. The next day Ruffini was whirled for ever from my sight.

All the rest of him, though it is nominally a tale of several years, is, to me, an unfeatured dream.

We heard, indeed, of his arrival in his native town, of the haste of the Genoese to do honour to him and his brother by electing them as the representatives of the city in the Sardinian Chamber of Deputies, and of the participation of the two brothers in the proceedings upon which so much depended. Then we heard of the appointment of the elder brother, for a time, to the post of Sardinian ambassador to France. But of Agostino, meanwhile, the news was sad. What strength had remained in his long-enfeebled frame had been too little for the tear and wear of new anxieties. Utterly prostrate, at last, by a paralytic affliction, he had to watch that progress of events, amid which he would have fain been active, as a helpless and bedridden invalid. He had been restored to his native land too late.

Why protract the story? Migration was tried—a sanitarium in Switzerland. But his last resting-place was to be Italy,—the Italy which had not then attained the state he could have wished for her, and in which we now see her, but which, looking at the actual Sardinia of Victor Emmanuel, he could think of as so far secure, and as not without hope of a better future. Here, at Taggia, a small coast-town in the Sardinian states, between Nice and Genoa, and in the vicinity, as I think, of that family-property of olive-plantations of which he had loved to speak, he waited, for months, in constant pain, the advent of the *severa amica*, as he had learnt to call death. His mother was with him to the last,

and his brother arrived in time to see him die. And when he was asked if he had any message to send to certain Edinburgh friends, who were named to him, the words "*Affetto profondo*" were uttered by him distinctly, but with difficulty. His death took place on the 3rd of January, 1855. On the 5th of January, he was buried in a new cemetery at Taggia, the authorities of the town, the national guard, and a great concourse of people, attending him to his grave. Forty-three years was the age which Ruffini had attained; and eight years of these, from his thirtieth year to his thirty-ninth, had been passed in Edinburgh.

CHAPTER VI

HUGH MILLER

In a review in a London newspaper of one of Hugh Miller's posthumous volumes, the critic, rather pooh-poohing Hugh Miller's reputation generally, observed that what was most conspicuous in him was the total absence of *genius*. He seemed to the critic to have been a diligent, ponderous kind of fellow, who had raised himself creditably from the ranks, and done pretty well, if one considered that Nature had denied him this master-quality. Now, I have read too many reviews of books to be surprised at anything I see in print; and, as there have been about a hundred definitions of "genius", it seemed reasonable enough that Fleet Street should have its own particular one. I had even a notion, from previous induction, that what Fleet Street, or a portion of it, considered to be "genius" consisted in advanced opinionativeness and a power of scribbling rapidly on any subject for an hour or two after dining at the Cock.

But turn the thing which way I might, this criticism did surprise me. Had it been said that Hugh Miller lacked speculative subtlety, or that his geology was not up to the mark, or that he

was clogged by Presbyterian theology and other forms of prejudice and provincialism, I should not have been at a loss to understand what was meant. But that what he wanted was *genius!* The word might go to the dogs as soon as the authorities in our language chose ; but, so long as it was kept, it seemed to me that, if the word was applicable to the description of any mind, it was to the description of Hugh Miller's. I had known him personally in a general way, with occasional pretty close glimpses, from 1841 to 1847 ; I had refreshed these older recollections of him with a long interview (still memorable to me), in his last house in Portobello only a few weeks before his death ; and I had read almost all that he had written, whether in his newspaper or in books. Either I must give up all confidence in my own impressions, or Fleet Street was wrong for once.

There was, I should say, more than "genius" in Hugh Miller—there was genius in that most mysterious of its forms for which Goethe provided a name when he called it "the demonic element". What reader of Goethe's Autobiography can have forgotten that extraordinary passage at its close where, speaking of what he had in view in his *Egmont*, he expounds, as a discovery of his life, his distinct perception of an influence in nature, in history, and in individual human character, which he could not reduce to law or natural order, and could only express by supposing the intermingling

of a something neither sensible nor supra-sensible with life and its affairs. If I understand what Goethe meant by the "demonic element", I have hardly known a man in whom there was so much of it as in Hugh Miller.

It appeared in his very look and demeanour. Who in Edinburgh, old enough to remember him, can forget the figure of that massively-built man, roughly apparelled in grey, or some dusty reddish-brown, like an ex-stone-mason not ashamed of himself, or the sad, resolute look of his sandy-coloured face, the features of which seemed smaller than they were from the quantity of reddish hair that matted his great round head? There was such a prevailing impression of reddishness, and even of stony reddishness, in his approach, that one instinctively thought of his own "Old Red Sandstone". His head might have been taken as a model for that of Gurth in *Ivanhoe*, or, with a little alteration, for that of Rob Roy—for whom also he would have been no inapt model for breadth of chest and personal strength.

As a stone-mason he used to lift or roll weights twice as great as an ordinary man could manage. He had a pride in this; and one of his habits, I noticed, was an inquisitiveness as to the physical measurements and capabilities of those with whom he came in contact. "What is your height?" he would say, suddenly facing you; or "What is the girth of your chest?" looking at you sideways; and

if you were not prepared with an exact answer he seemed surprised. He had, in particular, a malicious pleasure in inveigling his acquaintances, by some stratagem, to try on his hat—it being very rarely indeed that the hat found a head over which it did not descend to the nose. Yet there had been, he said, in his native town of Cromarty two heads decidedly bigger than his—one of which belonged to the most stupid man, not an actual idiot, he had known, and the other to a person very little superior. Such, or such-like, would be his talk in a casual meeting with him where the talk depended on himself.

In anything like mixed or dinner-table society, which, however, he avoided as much as he could, he was almost blockishly silent. Ladies would be dying to hear Hugh Miller talk, but not a word would be got out of Hugh Miller. The impression made by his singular speechlessness, coupled with his unusually powerful look, on more than one such occasion, has been described to me as little short of awe. But, indeed, even where he was more at his ease, there was always a sensation among those about him of abnormal impenetrability. There was then, as has been hinted, no remarkable deficiency of discourse. In a fine kind of husky whisper, and with a quaint kindliness and respectfulness of manner to his collocutor, whoever he might chance to be, he would confide whatever was interesting him at the moment—as that he had just

had a letter from So-and-so (perhaps taking it out of his pocket), or that the parcel he had in his hand was a Dutch translation of his "Footsteps of the Creator", which they had been so good as to send him ("it's rather droll, sir, to see yourself in Dutch"), or that he had just returned from a geological excursion and had found something curious. And so from this to that, not as if caring to speak, but with a courteous willingness to be agreeable, he would go on from topic to topic—asking some question, furnishing a reminiscence of his own to match the answer, interpolating a humorous remark, and not unfrequently citing a favourite author or repeating with feeling a scrap from an old poet.

His language was choice, and the idiom not Scottish, unless when he chose, but good English—rendered strange to the ear, however, by his peculiar far-north pronounciation. This, among other things, made a sort of interchange of the vowel sounds *i* and *u*. The phrase "bitter cup of affliction," for example, was pronounced nearly thus: "butter kip of affluction." There were moments in which, from a certain heat in what he said, an out-swelling of the tone, and an accompanying gesture as if he were moved to stand up and give emphasis with his clenched hand, the working in him of a great reserve of power was perceptible. But, in general, such was his quietness that even those who met him most frequently never felt that they knew him. His Free

Church friends in Edinburgh, among whom he moved most, and whose respect for him was so great that they would have accounted intimacy with him an honour, never could attain that intimacy. They had brought him from Cromarty to edit their newspaper and fight their cause; and he had filled that post as no one else could have filled it—for he came to it not as a hireling (money could not purchase Hugh Miller), but as one whose conscience was in the cause, and who had a better knowledge of the ecclesiastical history of his country, and of the needs of the popular heart in the question of the Kirk, than was possessed by his clerical colleagues.

But, though they could trust him and admired him, they could never manage nor adequately comprehend him. He walked about in Edinburgh, a mysterious mass of force, belonging to the Free Church, but belonging to it in his own way. Still the Cromarty stone-mason at heart, and with no sense that newspaper-editing was any great promotion for him, he probably carried in him a fund of recollections from his former life—recollections, say, of half the quarries in Scotland, and of Highland straths and glens—which he could not amalgamate with present circumstances, or share with those among whom his lot was cast. Hence, probably, in part, his self-involved manner, his independence of society, the sense he left on all of a mind shut in and impervious. He flashed out better in his books, or sometimes, as I have been told, amid the

scenes of nature into which he was led by his geological rambles. Once, when a scientific friend was with him, and they came on a great moss-covered boulder in a solitary spot, the friend was suddenly surprised by seeing him walk up to the stone in the attitude of a man inspired. He struck it three times with his hammer, exclaiming, "Aha! old fellow, how came *you* here? Declare, declare, declare!" It was the Druidism in him, as much as the geological spirit, that had been stirred.

Druidism I have called it, and it is a very good name for a form of the "demonic element" which was marked in Hugh Miller still otherwise than I have yet described. Of Scandinavian breed in the main—for his ancestors on both sides for some generations had been sea-faring men of the Scottish north-east coast—he had yet a Celtic dash in his pedigree, derived from a certain Donald Roy, a pious Highland seer of a hundred years back, of whom there were still strange legends. Now, not only had he a singular fascination for the memory of this second-sighted ancestor, but there was a vein in his life, as it is related in his Autobiography, which it is difficult to suppose that he did not attribute to his descent from that Celtic worthy. He never speaks of second-sight, nor any other of that class of phenomena, except in the rational spirit of modern science; but he tells stories of his own childhood on the faith of which the believers in the "occult" might claim him as a "medium". Thus he tells us how,

playing alone one day at the stair-foot of the long low house in Cromarty where he had been born, and where he and his mother dwelt while his father was at sea, he felt a sudden presence on the landing-place above him, and, looking up, saw "the form of a large, tall, very old man, attired in a light-blue great-coat" steadfastly regarding him. Though sadly frightened, he at once divined the figure to be old John Fettes, his buccaneering great-grandfather, who had built the house, and had been dead some sixty years. My impression is that Hugh Miller did all his life carry about with him, as Scott did, but to a greater extent, a belief in ghostly influences, in mysterious agencies of the air, earth, and water, always operating, and sometimes revealing themselves. Though, as he says, writing in 1853, he had experienced no after-return of his childish liability to visions, he seems to have had, all his life, a more than ordinary interest in stories of the supernatural, and far less disposition than men of his weight and amount of scientific information usually have to discredit the possibility of abnormal impulses and coincidences, sudden nervous horrors, and the bursting in upon man of unearthly sights and sounds. His books are full of legends of the kind, Celtic and Lowland, so told that one sees his imagination clinging to what his reason would fain reject. If he had been as cunning as Goethe, he would have formulized the thing in a high mythological expression "after the manner of

the ancients". But Goethe only believed, from his observation of nature and affairs, that some agency, unseen and perhaps personal and multitudinous, did intermingle itself with nature and human affairs, causing the incalculable and the contradictory. Hugh Miller, I fancy, believed in the breaking-through of this agency so as to be visible.

We all know the story of the Water-Kelpie—how, suddenly at nightfall, people sauntering on the bank of the river see a strange horse-like creature rising from the middle of the ford and hear a voice neighing from it, "The hour is come, but not the man", and how at that moment there dashes down the road sloping to the ford a traveller in hot haste who will not be stayed, who tears madly from those who would detain him, wades into the ford, misses his footing, and is swept away and drowned. If any man in Scotland, arriving by himself at nightfall at a dangerous ford, was likely to see the water-kelpie, it might have been Hugh Miller in one of his geological excursions. But I rather fancy the poor kelpie would have had the worst of it. "The hour is come and the man too, you big, unchancy brute," Hugh would have called out, dashing on to grapple with it in the water, as Beowulf did with the Grendel's mother.

For (and here is a third aspect of "the demonic," for which I can vouch) there was a tremendous element of ferocity in Hugh Miller. It amounted to a disposition to kill. He was a grave, gentle, kindly, fatherly, church-going man, who would not

have hurt a fly, would have lifted a child tenderly out of harm's way in the street, and would have risked his life to save even a dumb creature's; but woe betide the enemy that came athwart him when his blood was up! In this there was more of the Scandinavian than of the Celt. It appeared even in his newspaper articles. At various times he got into personal controversies, and I know no instance in which he did not leave his adversary not only slain, but battered, bruised, and beaten out of shape. It seemed to be a principle with him—the only principle on which he could fight—that a battle must always be *a l'outrance*, that there could be no victory short of the utter extermination of the opposed organism. Hence, in the course of his editorial career, not a few immense, unseemly exaggerations of the polemical spirit—much sledge-hammering where a tap or two would have sufficed. A duel of opinions was apt to become with him a duel of reputations and of persons. There were instances, I understand, in which, coming to a difference even with leaders on his own side in which he thought his own independence involved, he intimated beforehand to those concerned that he did not wish for a rupture, but that, if it was to be, he was quite prepared, and it must then be Hugh Miller in Scotland against all other men.

And, as he was dangerous to deal with if roused in a literary controversy, so, I should say, was he if meddled with in the field or on the road. Take the following story from his *First Impressions of*

England and its People:—He is on a tour through England for the recovery of his health, sometimes on foot and sometimes by rail, visiting the spots that have been familiar to him by name from boyhood for their associations with eminent names or occurrences in English Literature. He has come one evening by rail as far as Wolverton, meaning to sleep there and walk over the next morning to Olney, dear to him on the poet Cowper's account. But it so chances that the great fight between Caunt and Bendigo for the championship is about to come off in that neighbourhood, and all the blackguards in England are assembled in Wolverton. Not a bed is to be had for a plain wayfarer, and, following advice given him, he walks on in the moonlight to Newport Pagnell, a distance of four miles. "The way was lonely enough; nor were the few straggling travellers whom I met of a kind suited to render its solitariness more cheerful. About half-way on, where the road runs between tall hedges, two fellows started out towards me, one from each side of the way. 'Is this the road,' asked one, 'to Newport Pagnell?' 'Quite a stranger here,' I replied, without slackening my pace; 'don't belong to the kingdom even.' 'No?' said the same fellow, increasing his speed as if to overtake me; 'to what kingdom, then?' 'Scotland,' I said, turning suddenly round, somewhat afraid of being taken behind by a bludgeon. The two fellows sheered off in double-quick time, the one who had already addressed me muttering, 'More like an Irishman,

I think'; and I saw no more of them. I had luckily a brace of loaded pistols about me, and had at the moment a trigger under each forefinger."

Here I seem to see Hugh Miller as he was throughout his life. He was a massive, self-controlled, religious, frugal, and strictly-principled man, walking peaceably on the King's highway, and with an interest in all things quiet and lovely; but he believed in the rifeness of life-and-death forces around one, the possibility of upspringing murderous contingencies, human and superhuman, no less than if he had been in the thirteenth century; and he had that within him which answered to them, anticipated them, and policed himself. You overtook him geologizing at leisure in some out-of-the-way place, or you came upon him on some country road, turning his holiday into a pilgrimage to spots of historical note; he was the sort of man you would like to enter into conversation with, and he made no objection; you walked on a bit with him, your interest in him gradually rising into wonder; you felt, if you had any discernment, that he was, naturally and by culture, a grand kind of man; but, all the while, he did not know who *you* were, you see; you might be the devil, or one of his gentlemen of darkness, for all he knew; and so, while he is talking to you, what are his fingers doing? Playing with the triggers of two loaded pistols! A whirr of the brain, a momentary hallucination, even a mechanical mistake, and God knows what might happen!

CHAPTER VII

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

It was in 1843 that De Quincey, who had at several times before taken up his quarters at Edinburgh—in order, I suppose, to be near Wilson (Christopher North)—came again into that neighbourhood, there, as it proved, to end his strange dream of a life. He was then about fifty-seven years of age, and he lived on till 1859, for the most part either in Edinburgh itself or in the snug adjacent village of Lasswade, where he had relatives to tend him.

An account of De Quincey during these last sixteen years of his life would be a most singular memoir, if only it could be written. But the materials for any coherent account of him do not exist. What he did, or where he was, from week to week, no one had any means of keeping reckoning but himself. He came and went, appeared and disappeared, and that was all. By far the most graphic sketch of him in his last Edinburgh period that I know of is that contained in John Hill Burton's delightful volume *The Book-Hunter*. Among several portraits of mighty book-hunters known in the flesh to Hill Burton, and all lovingly drawn,

there is introduced that of a certain "Thomas Papaverius", which we may translate "Thomas of the Poppies", if any translation is necessary. "In what mood or shape", says Hill Burton, "shall *he* be brought forward? Shall it be as first we met at the table of Lucullus, whither he was seduced by the false pretence that he would there meet with one who entertained novel and anarchical opinions regarding the Golden Ass of Apuleius? No one speaks of waiting dinner for *him*. He will come and depart his own sweet will, neither burdened by punctualities, nor burdening others by exacting them. The festivities of the afternoon are far on when a commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other stray animal had forced his way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of the arrival—he opens the door and fetches in the little stranger. What can it be? A street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a parti-coloured belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list-shoes, covered with snow, for it is a stormy winter-night; and the trousers—some one suggests that they are inner linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand. Had chance thrown to him

a court single-breasted coat, with a Bishop's apron, a kilt, and top-boots, in these he would have made his entry."

Hill Burton goes on to describe the talk of this queer diminutive being so oddly introduced and apparelled—that silver talk of De Quincey of which the world has heard so much. Most exactly true is the account to all I have ever heard of Papaverius. Who, in Edinburgh or anywhere else, would not have delighted in the prospect of getting the opium-eater to his house, to dine with a few friends, or perhaps more quietly to have an evening with him? Nothing was easier, if you knew the way. To invite him, by note or personally, was of no use. He would promise—promise most punctually, and, if he saw you doubted, reassure you with a dissertation on the beauty of punctuality; but, when the time came, and you were all met, a hundred to one you were without your De Quincey. But send a cab for him, and some one in it to fetch him, and he came meekly, unresistingly, as if it was his doom, and he conceived it appointed that, in case of resistance, he should be carried out by the nape of the neck. It was no compliment to *you*. Anybody might have taken possession of him, unless by inadvertence time had been given him to escape by the back-window under pretext of dressing. So, if you knew the way, you *had* your De Quincey.

And what a delight! Hour after hour there was the stream, the sweet and subtle eddying on,

of the silver talk. But at length the small hours arrive, and one after another goes, and you yourself are fagged, and a little sleepy. Never mind! If a dissertation on sleep or on fatigue will reanimate you, and make you good for another hour, you may have it for the asking. It begins, oh horror! to dawn upon you that you have brought on yourself a problem. You have got your Papaverius, but how are you to be released from him? There are periods in everything, however; and, at last, on some impulse of his own, or some suasion of circumstance, the gentle, weirdly, and, in truth, exquisitely sensitive creature would take his departure. Out he would go "into the Night," as the Germans have taught us to express and spell it; and what became of him no one knew and no one cared. Ah! Reader, you may be the greatest man in the world and the most delicious of talkers, but if, when the street-door is locked behind you, and you have gone out into the Night with a capital N, there are three persons in the world that really follow you with their sympathies, and care what becomes of you, fortune has been good to you!

My own glimpses of De Quincey, I must say, did not present him to me in any such extreme of helpless quaintness. The first time I saw him was most pleasantly one evening in a room high up in one of the tall houses of the Old Town. He came in charge of a strong, determined man, who took all the necessary trouble. There were but a few

present, and all went nicely. In addition to the general impression of his diminutiveness and fragility, one was struck with the peculiar beauty of his head and forehead, rising disproportionately high over his small wrinkly visage and gentle deep-set eyes. In his talk, which was in the form of really harmonious and considerate colloquy, and not at all in that of monologue, I remember chiefly two incidents. The birthday of some one present having been mentioned, De Quincey immediately said, "O that is the anniversary of the battle of So-and-so," and he seemed ready to catch as many birthdays as might be thrown him on the spot, and almanack them all round in a similar manner from his memory. The other incident was his use of a phrase very beautiful in itself, and which seemed characteristic of his manner of thinking. Describing some visionary scene or other, he spoke of it as consisting of "discs of light and interspaces of gloom"; and I noticed that, with all the fine distinctness of the phrase, both optical and musical, it came from him with no sort of consciousness of its being out of the way in talk, and with no reference whatever to its being appreciated or not by those around him, but simply because, to whomsoever he might be talking, he would be thinking like De Quincey.

That evening passed; and, though I saw him once or twice again, it is the last sight that I remember next best. It must have been, I think, in 1846, on a summer afternoon. A friend, a stranger to

Edinburgh, was walking with me in one of the pleasant, quiet, country lanes near Edinburgh. Towards us, and the sole moving thing in the lane besides ourselves, came a small figure, not untidily dressed, but with his hat pushed far up in front over his forehead, and hanging on the back of his head, so that the back-rim must have been resting on his coat-collar. At a little distance I recognized it to be De Quincey; but, not considering myself entitled to interrupt his meditations, I only whispered the information to my friend, that he might not miss what the look at such a celebrity was worth. So we passed him, giving him the wall. Not unnaturally, however, after he passed, we turned round for the pleasure of a back view of the wee intellectual wizard. Whether my whisper and our glances had alarmed him, as a ticket-of-leave man might be rendered uneasy in his solitary walk by the scrutiny of two passing strangers, or whether he had some recollection of me (which was likely enough, as he seemed to forget nothing) I do not know; but we found that he too had stopped and was looking round at us. Apparently scared at being caught doing so, he immediately wheeled round again, and hurried his pace towards a side-turning in the lane, into which he disappeared, his hat still hanging on the back of his head.

That was my last sight of De Quincey; but a good many years afterwards I had the pleasure of receiving, in a circuitous manner, a kind word of

recognition from him, on a ground independent of any recollection he may have retained of my juvenile Edinburgh existence. This was just before his death; and one was glad to know by report that then, in his old age, this eccentric man of genius, this wise, and erudite, and beautiful spirit—this English Essayist, the real worth of whose remains, as compared with those of Lord Macaulay, will be found, I venture to say, as that of a mass of wrought silver against an equal mass of gold and copper—had let his wandering habits be brought within bounds, and was ministered to by the hands of willing affection. "I have always thought it a wonderful instance of the power of domestic care and management," says Hill Burton, "that, through the ministrations of a devoted offspring, this strange being was so cared for, that those who came in contact with him then, and then only, might have admired him as the patriarchal head of an agreeable and elegant household."

CHAPTER VIII

ABERDEEN AND ITS TRADITIONS

It must be fancy, I suppose; but I think I have never seen anywhere else so vast an arc of open sea as from the beach near Aberdeen. Eastward you gaze; not an island or a headland interrupts the monotony of waters to the far sky-line; and you know that beyond that sky-line you might sail and sail without interruption, till you reached Denmark or Norway. For Aberdeen, though a British city, is actually nearer, by measured distance, to either Norway or Denmark than to London.

The time may have been when this greater nearness of the Aberdeenshire coasts to the Scandinavian countries than to London was a greater nearness not only in measured map-distance, but also for practical purposes. Certain it is that, although Aberdeen, as the name implies, must have been a native Celtic settlement in the original Celtic times of North Britain, and although there are traces that as late as the twelfth century Gaelic was in use but a few miles inland from Aberdeen, and although to this day the western and mountainous parts of Aberdeenshire are fastnesses of the Gaelic, yet, as far back as memory can go, Aberdeen itself and the

adjacent tracts of coast must have been about the most thoroughly Scandinavianized portion of all Scotland. The submerged Celtic influence, I doubt not, exists there, as I believe it exists throughout all Scotland, and all England to boot, to an extent that has never yet been sufficiently appreciated; but, in some respects, it must be more submerged there, or more disguised, than in most other districts of the Scottish Lowlands.

In that colonization, however, whether purely Scandinavian or not, which overpowered the aboriginal North British Celts in this part of the Scottish coast, there must have been some now unascertainable peculiarity. The Aberdeen-men, including the men of the Lowland part of the shire as well as of the town, are and have always been, since there has been talk of them at all, a breed differing in some respects from the rest of the Scottish Lowlanders. For one thing, the rest of Scotland, though it makes much of them exoterically, almost disowns them esoterically, because of their dialect. There is no end to the jesting among the Scots generally about the pronunciation of the Aberdonians; and one of the best of the jests is the assertion that every Aberdonian who has left Aberdeen has a firm persuasion that it has been given to him alone to leave his dialect behind him. That is an exaggeration; but it is certain that a line could be drawn comprehending an irregular circuit of country round Aberdeen all the ruder natives of

which pronounce every *wh* as *f* and every *oo* as *ee*; while even the civilized natives who are emancipated from these oddities and use the formal English, retain a Doric tone, by which other Scots, themselves far enough from the Southern standard, can at once recognize them.

How this problem of the origin of the Aberdeen dialect is to be settled ethnology has never yet shown, and probably will never show. Was there any part of the Scandinavian region, or of the allied Teutonic, from which the peculiarities of *f* for *wh* and *ee* for *oo* could have been imported ready-made? Or, after all, was it the retiring Gaels that left these peculiarities as a bequest to their Scandinavian spoilers, as well as their town of Aberdeen, and some stray Celtic words which may still be picked out in the Aberdonian vocabulary, and are found nowhere else among the Scots—*e.g.* the verb *conach*, meaning "to spoil by triturtitum or crumbling"?

Scandinavians, Flemings, or whatever they were that first planted the Aberdonian breed among Ptolemy's *Taixaloi* in those parts, they must have found the site of their chief town already fixed for them. It was at a point on the coast at which two Aberdeenshire rivers—the Dee and the Don—discharge themselves into the sea, quite close to each other, after long separate courses. There is a difference of look and character between these two rivers, very like that which the terrible old rhyme

commemorates between the two rivers of the border, the Tweed and the Till :—

"Tweed says to Till,
'What gars you rin sae still?'
Till says to Tweed,
'Though ye rin wi' speed,
And I rin slaw,
Yet, whaur ye droon ae man,
I droon twa.'"

The Dee, rising far in the Highlands of the west, and in the upper parts of its course falling through some of the most magnificent scenery in Scotland, is a rapid river throughout, and even in the lowest and tamest part of its course has a gay, sprightly, ingenuous look. The Don, of shorter course, and taking its rise from a high peatland rather than from a real mountain-range, is, in the latter part of its course, a solemn, dark, malignant-looking river, with some gloomily-romantic spots on its fertile banks. The distance between the mouths of the two rivers is about two miles; but the tradition is that at one time the distance was much less, and that the Don has changed the spot of its outlet. Between these two rivers is the site of Aberdeen: this, its more usual name, literally meaning in Celtic "the mouth of the Dee," while the alternative "Aberdon," sometimes found in old writings, and still preserved in the adjective form, may imply equally "the mouth of the Don." It is to the Dee, however, that the town principally belongs, only straggling, by means of its northern suburbs, to the

Don, where these suburbs end in a special little town called "Old Aberdeen" for distinction's sake, and because it is now the more venerable in appearance, though it is really a later formation of Scottish history than the main town on the Dee. But the name Aberdeen, in ordinary usage, always includes the smaller town as well as the larger.

Had the Aberdonians of old times been ambitious to build their town of stone, they had the hardest and most durable building-stone in the world, the now famous Aberdeen granite, under their very feet. Almost wherever you quarry in Aberdeenshire, you come upon the primitive granite, either the grey kind, of which there are great masses close to Aberdeen itself, or the red kind, which is common near Peterhead. But the granite, though thus native and offering itself, must have been too obdurate a material for all save the clumsiest work of those times; and hence the first Aberdeen that heaves into the sight of history—say about the eleventh century—is, as far as the eye can discern it, not a prototype of the present granite city at all, but a town of rubble, woodwork, and thatch, with some church, or other large edifice, here and there, of imported ashlar or freestone. If any edifice was built completely of the native granite, it may have been the Castle; a building which once existed, and which has bequeathed its name to the site on which it stood, but of which no vestige has remained within the last five hundred years.

It was a great thing for Aberdeen when, in 1122, the Scottish king, Alexander I., made it a cathedral town by transferring to it the seat of one of the old Gaelic bishoprics. It was, perhaps, a greater thing when William the Lion favoured the town by sometimes keeping his court there, and by giving it certain charters of privilege (1179). Thenceforward we hear of it more and more as the most important burgh of the Scottish north-east. In the time of the Wars of Independence, Wallace was here, stirring up the north, giving despatches in behalf of trade with the Hanse towns to some Aberdeen skippers, and hanging some Aberdeen burgesses for deficient patriotism. Near to Aberdeen Robert Bruce gained one of his early victories over the English (1306); and so long and so grievously, after Bruce's accession, did an English garrison hold the aforesaid castle of Aberdeen that, when the citizens won it back, they determined to have no temptation of a castle among them any more, and razed the tyrannous fabric to the ground. In 1320 was begun, with ashlar stone, and with the help of the best architectural skill that Scotland could then command, the Cathedral of Old Aberdeen, called St Machar's, which it took more than a century to complete, and which still exists, the most venerable antiquity of the place. In 1333 there was a burning by an invading English fleet of all of the ancient town that *could* be burnt. A relic from those old days of contest with the English invaders, and

an express commemoration of the zeal of the Aberdonians in the cause of the Bruce kings, is the French motto "Bon-Accord", which figures in the arms of the town to this day, and is a frequent fancy name for the town itself. The year 1411 was a memorable year in the history of the town, for in that year it was that the great Celtic chieftain, Donald of the Isles, raging southward, with all the north-west of Scotland at his back, to overturn the government and reconvert the country into a Gaelic realm, resolved to take Aberdeen on his way. According to the old local ballad:—

"To hinder this proud enterpryse
The stout and michty Earl of Mar
With all his men in arms did rise
Even frae Crugarf to Craigievar;
And down the side of Don richt far
Angus and Mearns did a' convene
To fecht, or Donald cam sae nar
The royal bruch of Abirdene."

Foremost among the opposing forces, as in duty bound, were the citizens of the threatened town under their provost, Sir Robert Davidson. They met the tremendous Celt at a place called Harlaw on Donside, about fourteen miles from Aberdeen; and there they thrashed him, smashed him, and drove him into flight and ruin, saving Scotland from the Celtic relapse, and gaining a victory which was for that small country the counterpart of what Charles Martel's victory over the Saracens had been for all Europe. But it cost the Aberdonians dear;

and to this day Harlaw is a word to stir their memories. Among the many slain was their brave Provost Davidson. Because he died there, his name yet lives and is associated with Harlaw. I have stood by his tomb in old St Nicholas Church in Aberdeen, before that ancient fabric was pulled down (and when it *was* pulled down, such walls for thickness, and for the tenacity against pickaxe of the cement and concrete in them, no mason of our degenerate days even in that granite district had ever seen), and imagined his skeleton still lying underneath, with the fatal clefts from Harlaw on its ribs or skull. Nathaniel Hawthorne was surprised by the absence of very antique tombstones in the churches and churchyards of this country, and had seen, he says, as old monuments of that sort in Puritan New England as in Great Britain. So it may have been ; but in the churchyard wall of that same St Nicholas Church in Aberdeen I remember to have deciphered with my own eyes one Latin tombstone inscription which was cut in hard blue stone fifty years before Columbus discovered America. Possibly, however, it was an exceptional stray relic that had been bedded into the wall merely for preservation.

Even before Harlaw was fought, the little coast town between the Dee and the Don had somehow won the fancy of such rude Muses as then cared to seek a settlement in Scotland, and were looking about in it for a suitable spot or two. The poet

Barbour—Chaucer's elder contemporary, and the earliest man of letters of whom Scotland can distinctly boast—had been Archdeacon of Aberdeen. Many of those who fought at Harlaw must have remembered him well. But it was after the little town of Old Aberdeen had added an actual University to its Cathedral (King's College and University, founded in 1494 by Bishop Elphinstone, who brought Hector Boece from Dundee, that excessively Scottish Herodotus, to be its first principal) that Aberdeen began to give constant bed and board to the Muses. It is no difficult thing thenceforward to imagine the flourishing little community already organized into more than the mere embryo of all that Aberdeen has been since. It was already the duplex little community it has continued to be, and still is.

In the first place, there was the detached subsidiary town, with its Cathedral and its fine crown-roofed College, its quiet ecclesiastical and academic look, and its farmings and Don salmon fishings, for the benefit of the Cathedral and College revenues. But, separated from this by a mile, though for all purposes really keeping hold of it, there was the main commercial burgh of Deemouth—a net of streets along the Dee, and straggling in wood and granite over the grounds adjacent—accommodating its population: Davidsons, Menzieses, Lesleys, Duns, Chalmerses, Grays, Reids, Rosses, Forbeses, Robertsons, Cruickshanks, Burnetts, Jaffrays, Keiths,

Gordons, Inneses, Skenes, Jamiesons, Strachans, and others of still as familiar names. All these had their definite relations to each other as bailies of the town, tradesmen-burgesses, and what not; and some of them had relations also with the country lairds round, or were engaged with that shipping trade with France, the Low Countries, Norway, Denmark, and all parts of the North Sea and the Baltic, for which Aberdeen had had a name from time immemorial, and which gave it the timber, the tar, the iron, and the casks of wine it needed, in exchange for its wool, its hand-knit woollen hose, its hides, its grain, its cured fish, its blocks of granite, and its other saleable odds and ends. In this, the larger town, there were stone churches and other buildings, a market square with a fine town cross, and houses of Grey Friars, Black Friars, and Carmelites; but the headquarters of the Aberdonian muses were as yet over in the Cathedral suburb.

Two things were wanted to change this structure of the Aberdeen of the fifteenth century into that of the seventeenth. These were the Reformation, and the foundation of the Marischal College and University in the main town. Both came in due time, the second, indeed, as a consequence of the first. Somehow or other Aberdeen succumbed to the Reformation with the rest of Scotland; and there must have been a day when the Vatican heard, with an amount of emotion proportionate to the momentousness of the occasion, that Bon-Accord and the

district round had "cuist aff" the Italian connexion. But the process does not seem to have been one of great agony to the natives. They did what was necessary in the way of destruction and no more—leaving considerable remains of latent Roman Catholicism in the shire; and we hear of poor old fellows, who had been White Friars or Grey Friars, till they were turned adrift, lingering out their lives peacefully as "servants" in the houses of well-to-do citizens. One effect of the Reformation, such as it was, must have been to make the Cathedral suburb less important relatively to the main burgh than it had been. And the old equilibrium was even more disturbed when, in 1593, George Keith, 5th Earl Marischal, founded for the burgh his new Marischal College and University, intending it to proceed more according to the new Protestant lights than was expected of the neighbouring college of old Bishop Elphinstone. From that day till the year 1860, Aberdeen had the extraordinary distinction of requiring for herself, apart from the other Scottish towns, as many universities as served for the whole of England—actually two universities within twenty minutes' walk of each other. So great are the intellectual appetencies of a population that lives on the grey granite!

Among the "new lights" of Aberdeen, and after the foundation of Marischal College, were witch burnings. Aberdeen, in the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, seems

to have been the witch-burningest place in all Scotland. In the single year 1596-7, twenty-three women and one man were burnt there for witchcraft. The man's name was Thomas Leys; and the "dittay and accusation" against him ran thus:—

"Upon Halloween last bypast, at twelve hours at even or thereby, thou, the said Thomas Leys, accompanied with umwhile Janet Wishart, Isobel Cocker, Isobel Monteith, Katharine Mitchell, sorcerers and witches, with ane great number of ither witches, cam to the market and fish-cross of Aberdeen, under the conduct and guiding of the Devil, present with you all in company, playing before you on his kind of instruments. Ye all dansit about baith the said cross and the meal-market ane lang space of time; in the whilk devil's dance thou, the said Thomas, was foremost, and led the ring, and dang the said Katharine Mitchell because she spoilt your dance and ran not so fast about as the rest: testifiet by the said Katharine Mitchell, wha was present with thee at the time foresaid, dansin with the Devil."

It cost the town £21, 13s. 4d. (Scots) in peats, tar-barrels, fir and coals, including the fee of John Justice, the hangman, to burn Leys, and nearly £12 to burn Janet Wishart and Isobel Cocker,—part of this last sum, however, being spent in "four fadoms of tows" (*i.e.* ropes) required at the same time for trailing through the streets the dead body of Isobel Monteith, who had hanged herself in prison.

All this and much more of the same sort occurred but a few years before the accession of James VI. of Scotland to the English throne as James I.; and it was a speculation of Mr Charles Knight's that if (as he saw ground for believing) Shakespeare was in Aberdeen in October 1601, as one of that

company of London actors who are known to have then visited the town, and to have been entertained by the authorities, he may have caught up some of the haggard particulars of these local witchcraft trials, and inwoven them immediately afterwards into his *Macbeth*. Shakespeare, however, did not need to go so far from home for his witchcraft. There was plenty of it, if not quite of the "blasted heath" type, in contemporary England. It is therefore on the ground of a wider interest that zealous Aberdonians might still push the question whether Shakespeare was ever in their town. If he ever was there, he must surely have carried away other recollections of the place for subsequent use than its extraordinary notoriety for witch-trials and witch-burnings. May he not, for example, have sauntered up the Broadgate, and looked from the gateway there on what was to be seen of the infant pile of Marischal College, then but in the eighth year of its existence, and hardly yet out of the hands of the masons? At all events, he must have stood in the middle of the Castle-gate, and formed his general impression of the town, as strangers do yet, from that central station.

The seventeenth century was a troublous time for Aberdeen. The city had settled down, after the Reformation, into substantial Presbyterian ways, as they were then nationally arranged. With those first Presbyterian and Calvinistic ways the Aberdonians would probably have remained

content; but when James, after his accession to the English throne, began gradually to introduce changes into the system of the Scottish Kirk, so as to bring it into the form of a modified Episcopacy, there seems to have been something in the temper of the Aberdonians—or, perhaps, something in that double charge of the academical element which was so important a peculiarity in the atmosphere of the place—that disposed Aberdeen and its neighbourhood to acquiesce in the changes more easily and heartily than the rest of Scotland. Aberdeen got back her bishop; and round this bishop of moderate powers there clustered, more as his cronies than as his inferiors, the city clergy and the professors of the two Colleges. Now, harmonious enough among themselves, they formed a small and influential body, partly helping the magistrates in the strict official discipline of the town, partly venting their didactic energy on audiences from their pulpits and lecturing-chairs, and partly cultivating in private, in extremely good latinity, and with the help of a local printing-press, the other Dutch-built theological muses. For enjoyment of the true *otium cum dignitate*, you should have lived in the earlier half of the seventeenth century and been one of those "Aberdeen Doctors" of whom the whole Scottish world at home heard so much, and the merits of whom stray Scots in London would then try to force upon unbelieving Englishmen in circles where the talk became irritatingly monotonous about

Oxford and Cambridge. How would you like to have been Dr William Forbes, or Dr John Forbes of Corse, or Dr Robert Barron, or Dr William Lesley, or Dr James Sibbald, or Dr Alexander Scroggie, — round whom, and other theological doctors, and meeting them every day in the streets or in their college walks, were still other local luminaries of law, medicine, mathematics, and philosophy, with whose names I need not trouble you, but who were, almost to a man, Doctors likewise? For one who would have a leisurely enjoyment of life, with enough of occupation but not at high-pressure, it must have been no bad society to live in.

Sometimes, indeed, there would arrive from London, on a brief visit to his native place, and bringing with him a budget of London gossip, one of those Aberdonians whom a hard fate or irrepressible philanthropic motives had removed from the quiet pastures of their youth and led into exile in the southern Babylon. Such a one was the king's physician, Arthur Johnston, the most famous Latin poet of his day; and such a one was that hardly less famous Alexander Ross, whose numerous works had been read over by the "ancient sage philosopher" in *Hudibras*, and by no other mortal. Resident in the town, moreover, and one of the most respected and well-to-do of its natives, was the only man in Scotland who then called himself, or would now be called, an Artist,—the portrait-painter George

Jamesone, a pupil of Rubens. Whatever noble or other distinguished person in the land wanted to have his portrait painted had to send for Jamesone; and, if one may judge by the number of portraits from his hand that survive, he must have painted at one time or another nearly all the eminent Scotsmen of his age. He and the Doctors of the two Colleges must have been on the best of terms; they would drop in at his house of a morning, and see him, brush and pallet in hand. Nor can the town-clerk, Spalding, whose graphic registerings in homely language of the occurrences of his time are now prized by antiquaries, have been other than an interesting personality among his fellow-citizens. In short, in those days, Aberdeen, for a town in so Hyperborean a latitude, must have been an exceptionally comfortable place. The English satirist Cleveland's couplet about Scotland, written not long afterwards in the fury of his Royalist detestation of the Scots for what they had done to King Charles, is, or ought to be, well known :—

"Had Cain been Scotch, God would have changed his doom—
Not forced him wander, but compelled him home."

But from what has been said it will be seen that the couplet would have been totally inapplicable to Aberdeen at the time when Cleveland began to write. All in all, that was the golden age of the town of Bon-Accord.

But the convulsion came. When, on the signal given by Jenny Geddes, the pent-up Presbyterian

and Calvinistic zeal of the Scottish nation burst forth against the Liturgy, and against that Episcopacy more stringent than the Anglican, and that Arminian theology, which Laud and Charles were resolved to force upon them, and when the Covenant of resistance to the death was sworn at Edinburgh and throughout the land, and the Scots tore up by the roots even such Episcopacy as they had till then put up with, and flung the roots over the Border, and faced Charles in open war rather than let one of them be brought back,—never was poor town in such an unhappy predicament as Aberdeen. More stubbornly than any other town and shire, the town and shire of Aberdeen stood out against the Covenant; and when, by dint of deputations, finings, and dragoonings, the bulk of the population were brought into the general movement of their countrymen, there was a break-up of the "happy family" of the place, and a scattering of the Aberdeen Doctors. The first blood shed, the first conflict of men and horse with men and horse, in the great Covenanting struggle which ultimately involved the three kingdoms, was in those remote northern parts. The Aberdeen Doctors having been silenced and dispersed, and Presbyterianism having triumphed in Scotland, and not only re-assumed the rule there, but roused by example and contagion the Puritanism of England for England's larger and more complex movement, Aberdeen did at last distinguish itself as a *bonâ fide* Presbyterian town,—with men in it, such as

Provost Jaffray, capable of being of some note, through Cromwell's Protectorate, in the management of North British affairs.

But there remained a strong residuum of Royalism and Episcopacy in the shire; and so, after the Restoration, there was an easier adaptation there to the circumstances of the relapse than in the south and west of Scotland. We do not hear of many Aberdeenshire martyrdoms, like those of Ayr, Renfrew, and Galloway, for "Christ's Crown and Covenant," and the right of conventicles, through the reigns of Charles II. and James II. The more the pity! I, for one, whether in the interests of Presbyterianism or of those of the best and broadest Anythingarianism, should be glad to be able to reckon up even now a few gravestones of those old ecstatics scattered over the Aberdeenshire moors. But the cause of the deficiency of such monuments may have been partly that there was no Aberdeenshire Claverhouse to make them necessary.

At last, at the accession of William III., Scotland entered on the full possession of her Shorter Catechism, and of that Presbyterian system of Parish Kirk-sessions, district Presbyteries, periodical Provincial Synods, and annual General Assemblies for which she had fought so hard. Save that a remnant of old Scottish Episcopalians remained within her bounds to experience their turn of hard usage for a time, and save that the Presbyterian body itself at length gave off little secessions, and save that,

within the last generation or two, the Scottish aristocracy, with some memorable exceptions, have detached themselves from the Kirk and gone over without noise to the Episcopal Church, it is the system which has continued to regulate the collective social life of Scotland down to the present day. Aberdeenshire started on the career of the eighteenth century pretty much in the same condition in these respects as the rest of Scotland, though with more than average proportion of the Episcopalian remnant, and of the still older Roman Catholic remnant, in her population. How the town fared in this the earlier part of this lazy, unenthusiastic, but very substantial century (which, say what Scotsmen will against it, was somehow the birth-time of the most splendid men of all sorts that Scotland has yet given to the world) can be seen only hazily. A scrap or a glimpse here and there is all we have. Provosts or Bailies were pottering about the streets or quays, meeting for their suppers of crab-claws and Finnan haddocks, and keeping tightly in their hands, under dependence on higher powers, the business of their close borough. The trade with the Dutch was increasing, so that on the one hand young Aberdonians would go over to Leyden or Rotterdam, and on the other Dutch families would settle in Aberdeen; the city-clergy were preaching to their flocks, and exercising them in the Shorter Catechism, but gradually, like the rest of their brethren, falling into that theology of "cauld morality" which

characterized the century, and the coming prevalence of which, in lieu of the true evangel of the better days, David Deans had foreseen ; and lastly, the two Colleges, as before, with clergymen chiefly for their professors, were working obscurely on from session to session. But about the middle of the century,—whether owing to the commercial enlargement which Scotland then began to feel from the Union with England, or owing to more local causes,—Aberdeen again comes in sight more roundly and luminously. To this time, for example, or rather to a time just a little earlier, belongs the legend, far from unimportant in the history of Aberdeen, of the rise of the Hadden family.

A young Aberdonian named Alexander Hadden was living in the Windmill-brae. He was a lad of pushing spirit ; but, after various trials, finding no opening for him in Aberdeen, he resolved to go south and seek his fortunes. So, one morning, he set out with his staff and bundle, bidding farewell to Aberdeen. But, when he had got as far as the Bridge of Dee, about two miles of his way, and found himself on the borders of another county, he began to waver. Some sound, equivalent to the famous "Turn again, Whittington," rang in his ears. Recollecting the old *freit* or superstition that, when you are in doubt which way to go, you should throw your staff as far from you as you can, and, whichever way the head of the staff points, that is the way you ought to follow, he flung his staff forward on the

road he was going. Lo! when he came up to it, the head of the staff pointed back to Aberdeen. Back to Aberdeen he went, but with rather a heavy heart, and not sure but his neighbours might think him a fool. But one of his neighbours did *not* think him a fool. She was a good old woman, also of the Windmill-brae, who had five pounds of her own. She lent the young man the five pounds, and told him to be sure to be at the market on the Green very early the next Friday morning, so as to catch the country people on their first arrival there with their week's supply of woollen hose for the dealers. The hose trade was then still the leading business in Aberdeen; and this part of it—the purchase of the stockings, etc., from the country wives who had woven them—was conducted by chaffering in the open air of a large space of low level, then still called "the Green," though it was enclosed within old houses. The next Friday morning, accordingly, he was on the Green at what he thought an early hour. But he had not been early enough; for "old Bailie Dingwall had been there before him," and the hose of that week had been all bought up. But the next Friday he knew better, and being in the market *very* early, he had done a good stroke in hose before Bailie Dingwall came. And so from this beginning he grew and he grew till, marrying well (I think it was the wide-awake Bailie Dingwall's daughter that he married), he became the most powerful and prosperous public man of the place,

and the founder of that family of the Haddens whose names for three generations were household words in Aberdeen, whose marriages and intermarriages grasped the undisputed government of the municipality till the time of the Reform Bill, and by whose enterprise, even before the last century closed, Aberdeen had mills and manufactories and smoking chimney-stalks.

Two of the sons of that original autocthonous Hadden I remember well as very old men—old Provost James Hadden and his brother, Provost Gavin Hadden, who had been Provosts of the town in and out during all living memory ; but the legend of the rise of the family came to me afterwards, at the time of a commercial crash which befell its third and fourth generations, and under which Aberdeen shook and staggered. It came to me in the form of a little twopenny tract then put forth by an aged butler who had been a servant of the family all his life, and whose agony at a catastrophe which was to him as if the heavens had fallen made him garrulous as to what he remembered or had heard. I wish I could lay my hands on the tract now, for I think it was one of the best bits of biography on a small scale I have ever possessed.

During the first generation of the Hadden dynasty in Aberdeen—corresponding with the period of the Dundas despotism for Scotland in general—the town and the two Colleges twinkled with a second cluster of intellectual lights, perhaps a little better known

now, because of their nearness to our own time, than their predecessors, the "Aberdeen Doctors" of the seventeenth century. Scotland, indeed, had begun, though rather later after the Union than might have been expected, to take a conscious share, on her own ground, in the thought and literature of Great Britain as a whole. Edinburgh had become an important literary metropolis for the northern part of the island, containing, in Hume, Adam Smith, Dr Robertson, and others, permanently or chiefly resident there, a group of men that could not but attract the eye even after it had rested on the larger contemporary London group in the midst of which moved Dr Johnson. But all the new intellectual activity of North Britain was not concentrated in Edinburgh. Glasgow had a little group of her own; and there was a third little group in Aberdeen. There were interchanges of men between the three cities, in the form of occasional transferences of Professors from one University to another; but, on the whole, the three groups existed apart.

By far the most important man in the Aberdeen group, until he was removed to Glasgow in 1764, was Dr Thomas Reid, the metaphysician: at first minister of New Machar parish, within a few miles of the town, and then Professor of Moral Philosophy in King's College. It was in Aberdeen that Reid meditated and matured that sober system of Philosophy, in reply to Hume, which he carried

with him to Glasgow, and which, as put forth subsequently in his works, and expounded by Dugald Stewart, and imported into France by Royer Collard, became known among the metaphysicians of Europe as distinctively the philosophy of the Scottish School. While he was still in Aberdeen, Reid gathered round him, in a deipnosophistic or philosophico-convivial club, which met in taverns, a number of kindred souls, mostly his fellow-professors in one or other of the two Colleges. Many a jolly evening they had, with Reid in the midst of them, for essays and discussions, and savoury eating, and port-wine, and punch and tobacco; and, even after Reid removed to Glasgow, the Club continued to be an institution of the place. With the names of some of these Aberdeen deipnosophists—Gregory, Gordon, Ogilvy, the two Skenes, Farquhar, and Dr Alexander Gerard—none but grubbers in forgotten literature can be expected to be familiar; but two of them have left their names still in men's mouths. One of these was Dr George Campbell, Principal of Marischal College, an acute theologian and Kirk-leader of his day, whose "Ecclesiastical History," and, yet more, his "Philosophy of Rhetoric," still find readers. The other, and the best known now after Reid, if not better known to many, was the poet James Beattie, Professor of Philosophy in Marischal College from 1760, and with as high a reputation throughout the country then for his "Essay on

Truth," of which no one thinks anything now, as for his "Minstrel" and other poems that may still be read with pleasure. As one reads them, and realizes what a tender-natured man, if not strong, Beattie must have been, and with what a vein of the softer genius he was touched, one cannot help thinking of Beattie among the Aberdonians as a somewhat peculiar accident of the time:—

"At the close of the day, when the hamlet is still,
And mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove,
When nought but the torrent is heard on the hill,
And nought but the nightingale's song in the grove,
'Twas thus, by the cave of the mountain afar,
While his harp rung symphonious, a hermit began:
No more with himself or with nature at war,
He thought as a sage, though he felt as a man."

What he began was a lyric, of which this was one most plaintive stanza:—

"'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn; but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For Morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfumed with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew:
Nor yet for the ravage of Winter I mourn:
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save;
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn?
O, when shall Day dawn on the night of the grave?"

Artificially expressed these verses, of course, as all British verses then were! One may be permitted, in particular, to ask where near Aberdeen Beattie found his nightingale. Mavises are there, and larks, and blackbirds, and yellow-yerlings, and linnets in plenty, but no nightingales. Doubtless

Beattie found his nightingale where he also found his "harp ringing symphonious"—in his own musical fancy and his recollections of books. But no one can read the verses, or anything else of Beattie's, without discerning real feeling and sweetness beneath the rhetorical artifice. "Poor Edwin was no vulgar boy"; and that he lived among the tough-fibred Aberdonians so long, and loved them so well, and was respected by them, and, in his later days of breakdown and despondency under domestic affliction, pitied and caressed by them, is creditable to him and to them. He was not a native of Aberdeen, but had come hither in early life, from the district of the same east coast, a little farther south, where he had been born.

Two visits of distinguished strangers, which Aberdeen received while Campbell and Beattie and others of Reid's deipnosophists were its social notabilities, are duly recorded in its annals: Dr Johnson's visit, with Bozzy for his pilot, in 1773, and a flying visit of Burns in 1787. Both were, in their way, failures. Every honour was shown to Johnson, and they made him a freeman of the town; but the deipnosophists were afraid of him, and, though they gathered round him and invited him to their houses, were shy to speak in his presence. "We sat contentedly at our inn," says Bozzy, speaking of their last night in the town, "and Dr Johnson then became merry, and observed how little we had either heard or said at Aberdeen

—that the Aberdonians had not started a single mawkin (*i.e.*, hare) for us to pursue." I am glad to be able to give a hitherto unpublished anecdote of Johnson's visit to Aberdeen, which partly redeems the credit of the town, thus lowered by the pusillanimity of its big-wigs. While Johnson was in the town, a house in one of its streets, called Huckster Row, was undergoing the process of being "harled" (*i.e.*, whitewashed) outside with a mixture of lime and gravel. Either because the process interested the Doctor, or because he was in an absent fit, as he was passing that way, he stopped underneath the ladder on which the man who was doing the work stood with his bucket of "harl" and his trowel. He stood a long while, the man politely ceasing his work so as not to splash so grand-looking a stranger. But the man, being short-tempered, at length got tired; and, on Johnson's perceiving his impatience and calling up to him, "I hope I am not in your way, my man," answered at once, "Fient a bit are you in *my* way, gin you're nae in your nain" (Devil a bit are you in *my* way, if you're not in your own), at the same time resuming his work, and sending a splash of the "harl" from his trowel against the wall so as to give the Doctor's coat the benefit of the drippings. The anecdote may be no bad metaphor of the entire history of Johnson's visit to those outlandish parts.

But Burns, who might have expected a heartier reception, and whose father had come from that east-

coast region, and had left relatives there, seems to have found himself equally out of his own way among the Aberdonians fourteen years later. He speaks of meeting Mr Chalmers, the printer, whom he calls "a facetious fellow", Mr Ross, "a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler", Mr Marshall, "one of the poetical *minores*", Mr Sheriffs, "author of *Jamie and Bess*, a little decrepit body, with some abilities", Professor Gordon, "a good natured, jolly looking Professor", and, above all, the Episcopalian Bishop Skinner, who was interesting to him as the son of the author of *Tullochgorum*. But he does not seem to have met so much hospitality as Johnson did; and, with this parting entry in his journal, "Aberdeen a lazy town"—he went his way.

Beattie's death occurred in 1803. It is about this time that, for me at least, whose recollections go back as far as into the twenties, the Aberdeen of the past may be said to have come to an end, and a new and more familiar Aberdeen to have begun its existence. For, in my childhood, the generation that had in their youth known Beattie and Campbell, and the rest of the eighteenth century set, were still alive, and through the medium of *their* memory the whole intervening period was accessible as a living tradition. The changes had been many and rapid in that period. Going through the town, and surveying it with a view to discriminate the old from the new, one could still, indeed, pick out, by the names of streets and their looks, the remaining skeleton of

the old burgh as it had been in the eighteenth century, or even in the preceding centuries back to the days of Bruce. The Windmill Brae, the Green, the Correction Wynd, the Nether Kirkgate, the Broadgate, the Guest Row, the Gallowgate, the Upper Kirkgate, the Schoolhill, the Woolmanhill, the spacious Castlegate with its cross, Huckster Row, the Ship Row, the Justice Port, etc., etc., all remained, some still useful thoroughfares, with good shops in them, but others hideous in the squalor into which they had degenerated, as the old parts of towns do; and one or two of them doubly hideous from the effects of moral putridity at the mouths of their ugliest and narrowest courts. To go through Justice Port, even in the daytime, was to hear, within one or two minutes, full excerpts from the foulest wealth of anatomical and physiological words known to the British vocabulary; and even Justice Port was as nothing compared with one long narrow lane called the Vennel, in whose double row of ghastly houses, their windows stuffed with rags and old hats, brutality was more quiet only because more murderous.

In no unfit association with those physically gruesome bits of the old town was another relic of a now utterly extinct state of society. Aged Aberdonians still alive can remember the last of the Aberdeen hangmen. He lived in a steep stony declivity of the town, off the Castlegate, called from old times "the Hangman's Brae"; and here, in the

long intervals of the special acts of his profession required from him latterly, he sold fish. Among the perquisites of his office, was the right of taking a fish *gratis* out of every fish-wife's creel on market days—a right which the fish-wives, superstitious of his touching their creels, respected by always throwing him, when he approached, one of the best fishes they had. But he eluded observation as much as possible; and there were stories of respectable citizens encountering, in their morning walks in the suburbs, a venerable old man of meditative gait, and dressed in black, with whom they would hold pious communings for a mile or two without knowing that he was the hangman. In that poor soul's memory, too, as in the memories of many of those among whom he slunk about superannuated, must have lived the recollections of the rapid changes that had transmuted the Aberdeen in which he had begun his craft into the modern city in which he was hardly recognizable. What extension of building, in the first place: new piers and quays; wide new streets in all directions, the clean hard granite of which, squarely dressed by the pick, contrasted with the dingier and quainter granite of the old parts of the town which they crossed and enclosed; and, above all, the noble length of Union Street, running from the Castlegate westwards for three quarters of a mile, and carried in the middle straight over a great dell by a magnificent bridge of one span.

And this extension but indicated the increased

population, the increased trade and commerce, and the increased wealth, which the city had to accommodate. Aberdeen, as I first recollect it, was a city of about 60,000 inhabitants. It contained mills and manufactories, iron-foundries, brass-foundries, comb-works, rope-works, and an agglomeration of all the minor trades that can be carried on in shops; along its quays and jetties was a long range of shipping, from coal smacks and fruit smacks to whaling ships and large steamers, always lading and unlading with the clank of chains, and giving inquisitive boys their first lessons in the miscellaneousness of things; and at one part of the harbour were great dockyards, from which every now and then one of the peerless fast-sailing Aberdeen clippers slipped down the greased ways, a splendid launch. The city was now so large that even to roving and inquisitive boys many parts of it, away from their "ain gate-end" (which was the local expression for vicinity to their own homes), remained comparatively unfamiliar. Causewayend and Cleave-the-Wind were, to the juvenile imagination of the Woolman Hill or Dee Street, very out-of-the-way parts. For, in walks beyond the town most frequented both by juniors and elders, there were certain favourite directions. There was one walk out to Rubislaw Quarry and the Bleachfields, with a large option of cross-roads and ramifications. Another, in which there was a choice, through different suburbs of villas and cottages with

gardens, was to the Bridge of Dee, or to nearer or more distant spots of the river's steep and cheerful banks. Then there were the long sands of the sea-shore, stretching from the pier-head, against which, at high tide or at low tide, there was generally a savage dash of foam and breakers, away to the stake-nets and the Don mouth, with the continued coast line visible as far as Peterhead; and fringing those sands were the spacious links, a range of sand-flats and sand-hillocks, covered with sea-grass and furze, where golfers in red coats plied their stately game, with the massive Broad Hill and ploughed fields between them and the town. Or out King Street you might go; if it was in the evening, listening on your right to the eternal roar of the sea, which, though a mile off, seemed to be tearing towards you over the dark intervening flats; or, if it was in the day (in which case, however, your route in the same direction would probably have been by the old narrow road through the Gallowgate and the Spital), making for the picturesque Old Town and the hoary cathedral and its tombs overhanging the Don, and ending at the wizard Brig of Balgownie, the antiquity of which no man knew, spanning the Don at one of its darkest pools. All in all, this Brig of Balgownie, celebrated by Byron for itself and for the prophetic rhyme attached to it, is perhaps the most romantic spot near Aberdeen.

But, within the town itself, the main length of

Union Street, from its more bustling end, where the chief inns and shops were congregated, out to its quiet western extreme of dwelling-houses and mansions, afforded—more especially on clear, starry nights, when the mica particles in the granite glittered, and the long rows of lamps were seen rising and falling in picturesque perspective—a sufficient saunter to and fro. In that northern latitude the nights are perceptibly keener and longer in winter, and shorter in summer, than in England. The Aurora Borealis, or Merry Dancers—so rare a phenomenon in the south of England that the newspapers record any very conspicuous occurrence of it—used at certain seasons of the year to be an almost nightly sight. And from those Polar Regions, of the comparative nearness to which these twinkling streamers in the northern sky at night were a mysterious sign, Aberdeen sailors that one knew had brought, in Aberdeen whaling-ships, the very oil, that lit the town. For as yet the town was lit with oil, though gas was coming in. A curious sight, also characteristic of Aberdeen to exactly the same effect, was that, in not a few places in the outskirts of the town, one saw the jaw-bones of a whale placed arch-wise at the entrance to some field or farm, to form a gateway. Such whalebone-gateways, I should suppose, have now altogether disappeared.

As the Aberdonians are a breed of North Britons of peculiar dialect, so, in the semi-comic representa-

tions of them by their fellow-countrymen, they invariably figure as a breed peculiar in some respects of make and character. They are said to be, in the main, an unusually large-boned race; to which phrenologists have added, on the authority of statistics, the more specific statement that they are a large-headed race, the Aberdeen hatters having to keep in stock, for common native demand, two sizes of made hats larger than are required in any other town. What this may imply if true, I know not; I only know that the town contained smallish-headed and small-boned men in sufficient abundance, some of whom were about the ablest men in the place; and that, on the other hand, the town, while it also had able men of large build and large heads, never seemed to be more deficient than others in big-brained blockheads.

But there is another, and more negative, estimate of the Aberdonians among their countrymen. All those qualities which the English are in the habit of attributing to the Scotch generally, the Scotch generally, discussing matters among themselves, are in the habit of handing over—the worst qualities especially—to the Aberdeen men. Are shrewdness, unimaginative hard-headedness, and plodding perseverance Scottish characteristics? Then, in these respects, according to the opinion of their countrymen, the Aberdonians are *Scotissimi Scotorum*, the Scotchest of the Scotch. Is caution a Scottish characteristic? Then, according to the rest of the

Scots, Aberdeen caution is ordinary Scotch caution raised to the fourth power. And so on through the other qualities in the list. Now, although aware of the necessary fallaciousness of such general impressions respecting communities, one *might* have a recollected sense of something in the intellectual habit of the Aberdonians, to which one could suppose that the popular estimate of them referred. If one were to say that the Aberdonians *were* a hard-headed people with a prevalence among them of cold laboriousness and a suspiciousness of disposition, that might be one way of expressing it. If one were to say that they were such a people, sixty or seventy years ago, that the last kind of mind that would have been expected to appear among them, or that could have sustained itself among them, would have been a mind of the Shelley type, that might be another vague expression of what is meant. But on the whole, a less offensive form of expressing the matter may be to say simply that in those days the Aberdonian intellect was more statical than dynamical.

Yet, at the time of which I speak, there were appearances of a dynamical stirring among the Aberdonians. They had been in a state of extraordinary excitement about the Reform Bill, which was, among other things, to raise their town from the position of a mere member of a group of Parliamentary burghs, to that of a single Parliamentary burgh having a representative all to itself. Enthusiastic crowds shouting political cries, with

prearranged pageants and processions of the trades along the streets, were still frequent; and this prevalent Whiggism was but the outcome in a secular direction of a spirit which had long held possession of them in religious matters. While the *shire* of Aberdeen remained, ecclesiastically, an almost unbroken mass of eighteenth-century Moderatism—so that in the great votes on the Non-intrusion question then approaching in the General Assembles of the Kirk, the Aberdeenshire clergy and the Dumfriesshire clergy formed together the strength or ballast of the "Moderate" party—the clergy and the people of the *city* were in the main of that "Evangelical" school in theology and in kirk-politics, the gradual growth of which, in the first generation of the nineteenth century, from the position of a small minority to that of a national majority, is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the modern history of Scotland. Now the man of whom, besides that he was singular in other ways, it may be fairly said that he had exercised the greatest influence in bringing Aberdeen into this state of spirit, was the man of whom I purpose to give some account in the following chapter. He was not a native Aberdonian, but a naturalized Irishman.

CHAPTER IX

THE REV. DR KIDD

About the year 1830 there was to be seen walking slowly, almost at any hour, through the streets of Aberdeen, a venerable grey-headed man of massive build and peculiarly dignified appearance, in handsome clerical costume ending in black-silk stockings; a man erect in gait, and looking before him, or to the right and left as he advanced, with an air of authority and portly courage. Had you followed him you would have seen, by the respectful demeanour of those whom he met, that his authority was recognised. You would have seen hats touched to him, frankly or sheepishly, according to the rank and character of the owners; you would have seen heads turned to look after him; occasionally, if your powers of observation had been very sharp, you would have noticed, in some street-group of the idler sort, a look of uneasiness at beholding him approaching, a disposition to break up, and turn down any convenient court or cross-street so as to avoid him, or, if that could not be, a feeling of relief when he had passed and had not administered to them a gratuitous blowing-up. Among the children, on the contrary, you

would have seen a wonderful attraction towards him, a wonderful habit of finding out by rumour among themselves when he was anywhere near, and of gathering from the side-streets, or even from the houses, so as to place themselves in his way. Their manner, or at least that of the boys, was to place themselves three or four together, a few feet in advance of him on the pavement, and to wait stock-still with their caps off till he came up, when invariably he put his hand on each little waiting head with these words of blessing: "Be all good," "Be all good." In any of the more crowded thoroughfares his walk was a regular succession of these kindly be-all-goods and pattings of young heads; and such mystic virtue was supposed to lie in the Doctor's blessing and head-patting that little rogues have been known to secure a double share of it fraudulently by bolting off after the first be-all-good, running hastily round a few streets, and placing themselves a second time in the Doctor's way, with all imaginable gravity, so as to be be-all-gooded over again. But this was a bold act; and what might be the consequences if the Doctor, who was very wide awake, should detect one filching a second blessing from him on false pretences, was a thought of some alarm.

The title of "The Doctor," which I have already given to this local worthy, was one specially his. Doctors of various kinds were plentiful enough in the town, then as now; but if you had spoken of

"The Doctor," then, unless the context had implied that you were speaking of the particular medical man attending some case, you would have been understood—at least in that large quarter of the town which saw most of him—to mean the Rev. Dr Kidd. By the fuller designation, which he himself liked to use on formal occasions, he was "James Kidd, D.D., LL.OO.P."; and portraits of him, in his clerical gown and bands, with this designation underneath, in facsimile of his own elegant and flowing handwriting, were common enough in the booksellers' windows in the town, and in the houses of private families. Copies of these portraits, either by themselves or prefixed to certain books which the Doctor had written, had even travelled out of Aberdeen into parts where the rumour of him had spread; and latterly local sculpture took possession of him and produced a life-size bust, copies of which in plaster were bought by even poor people out of affection for the original. I remember one of those busts which, to prevent the effects of dust upon it in its pure white state, the family possessing it had caused to be painted jet-black. The "D.D., LL.OO.P." did not appear, of course, on the busts, but only on the engraved portraits. The last five letters of this designation expressed (according to the device in such cases of signifying a plural by the duplication of a letter) one of the two official capacities in which the Doctor was and had long been known in Aberdeen—*Linguarum*

Orientalium Professor, or Professor of Oriental Languages in Marischal College.

But, though actually fulfilling the duties of this office, and teaching Hebrew every winter session to considerable classes of divinity students congregated in Marischal College from the whole north of Scotland, Dr Kidd was far better known to the community at large in his other and more popular capacity as minister of Gilcomston Chapel. It was a very large, plain, square-built place of worship in the north-west of the town, and the centre of what was in fact a large parish, although nominally it had not then the full rights of a parish, but was an ecclesiastical district cut out of the vast parish of Old Machar. Though, as only minister of such a "chapel of ease" to one of the parishes of the Presbytery, Dr Kidd had not a seat in the Presbytery, he was, to all intents and purposes, a co-Presbyter of the city clergy, and, in popular repute, more illustrious in his way, more a king in the place, than all the rest put together. For one thing, the congregation of Gilcomston Chapel was the largest in the neighbourhood, one of the largest in the whole of Scotland; and, as minister of this congregation, though it consisted mainly of the poorer and the respectable middle sort—the Doctor held it together by his influence, and gave it celebrity far and near by the wonderful three sermons with which he roused it every Sabbath. Of these sermons stray comers might have the benefit if they did not object

to standing in the passages among the red-cloaked old women and the poor old men who statedly occupied the stools and benches there.

Dr Kidd was no ordinary local power, but the head of a constituency whose enthusiasm for him would, if necessary, have swamped the rest of the town in his behalf. But there was no such necessity. Although it was the Gilcomston district that mustered immediately round him and swore by him in all things, the whole town felt a kind of property in him. In other parts of the country he was known as "Dr Kidd of Aberdeen"; and, had the dimensions of Gilcomston Chapel and the distances of the town allowed it, I verily believe that the reality would have corresponded with the name, and that at least the whole *populace* of the place—that word used to exclude the wealthy, the fastidious in habit, and the lovers of theology only in its cold-drawn forms—would have belonged to Kidd's congregation. At all events, the children all through the town, no matter in what parish and locality, gathered round his footsteps for his well-known blessing. To young and old no living figure in the town was so familiar as his. No man perhaps was ever known by sight to all London except the Duke of Wellington, whose nose and face proclaimed him even where he had never been seen before. By no such inference from portraits, but by repeated actual vision of his portly figure and his handsome silk stockings, his white face (which must have once had

much of the sanguine in it), his amorphous rather than aquiline nose, his white hair now thinned to baldness at and over the temples, and his rich Irish eyes, every soul in Aberdeen that knew anything at all knew Dr Kidd.

His rich Irish eyes! I see them now as such in a portrait before me; in which also I seem to recognize a something Irish in the general cast of the countenance—though no such thing occurred to me in those infant days when I first gazed upon the Doctor in his pulpit or elsewhere. Irish, English, and Scotch were then all one to me, I suppose; and I had not heard of the doctrine of races. But now it seems to me as if I could sum up, to my own satisfaction, a good deal of what I remember of Kidd's peculiar power, and of the nature of his influence, by recollecting that he was an Irishman among the Aberdonians.

Born in County Down, in 1761, of poor Protestant parents—who, though they were probably of Scottish descent, had become Irish enough by naturalization in all save religion—Kidd had been tossed about the world for thirty-two years of his life, a resolute Irish adventurer, before fate, which makes such odd marriages of men with the places where they are needed, planted him in hard-headed Aberdeen. Till his twenty-third year he had remained in Ireland: in his childhood, left to the care of his poor pious mother, who had removed with him and his two brothers to her own county of Antrim, and of

whose first instructions to him in the Bible he had a warm memory to the last; then, in his boyhood, struggling into Latin with the help of what chance schooling could be had for a poor widow's son, and looking forward to the time when he might attain the height of his ambition, and be a preacher; then, in youth, while still eager for self-improvement, and especially for a grasp of English grammar and elocution, himself setting up a poor school for farmers' children, and in a short time a more flourishing one, on the strength of which he married a farmer's daughter. It was a very early marriage; and the outlook in Ireland being but meagre, Kidd and his wife, with what little money they had, emigrated to America in 1784. His stay in the United States, where he landed without a single letter of introduction, extended over some years. During those years — forming the second or American period of his life—he shifted about a good deal as he could find employment in teaching; but at length he settled in Philadelphia, where he first opened an academy of his own, and afterwards was attached as usher to Pennsylvania College, eking out a livelihood for his family by acting at the same time as corrector of the press for a printer in good business.

It was the sight of the Hebrew characters in the course of his duties in the printing office that first set him upon learning Hebrew. With such passion did he take to the study that one day, going to buy

a new suit of clothes, for which he had painfully saved the money, the recollection of a Hebrew Bible he had often looked at wistfully in a Dutch bookseller's shop window proved too much for him. The bookseller baulked the tailor, and the new suit was postponed indefinitely in favour of the Bible. What with private labour, what with the help of a Portuguese Jew (who fleeced him awfully for his lessons), and what with incessant attendance on Friday evenings in the Jewish synagogue in Philadelphia, he seems really at this time to have acquired an unusual practical fluency in the Hebrew tongue, if not the kind of acquaintance with it that would now satisfy a sound Orientalist. A certain restlessness ensued from the new possession. His mind was divided between two projects: the project of a journey in Syria and the East generally, that he might plunge more deeply into the Oriental tongues; and the project of a migration for a time to Scotland, to qualify himself for the ministry by the study of Divinity under the then celebrated biblical commentator, Dr John Brown of Haddington. But, by this time, Kidd had made friends in America. I think he knew Jefferson; at all events, he knew Dr Benjamin Rush, a celebrated physician and politician; among the clergy and collegemen of Pennsylvania and other states he had not a few acquaintances; and among the pupils he had trained in Philadelphia was at least one whose name the Americans remember—Commodore Decatur, after-

wards killed in a duel. These friends remonstrated with Kidd. Why should he quit America? Dr Rush succeeded in driving one of his projects—that of a visit to the East—out of his head. "I think I see you", he said to the young Irishman, "returned to America after your tour in Asia, and doing what?—lecturing to empty benches. A tour in Asia? No, no! Study men and things where you are."

But the other project of a visit to Scotland to learn Presbyterian theology at the fountain-head was not given up. Leaving his wife and children in America, he did re-cross the Atlantic, carrying with him letters from Dr Rush to some of the Edinburgh notables. By their advice, or on his own motion, he began now, when about thirty years of age, to make up his leeway in regular academic training by attending the principal classes in the University of Edinburgh—Hill's Latin lectures, Dalzell's Greek, Dugald Stewart's in Moral Philosophy, and even Black's in Chemistry and Munro's in Anatomy—supporting himself the while by setting up, with some *éclat*, extra-collegiate classes in the Oriental languages. Dr John Brown being dead,—instruction under whom would have implied attachment to one of the bodies of Presbyterian Dissenters in Scotland,—Kidd had so far changed his mind on that subject as to enter himself in the theological classes of the University in training for the ministry of the Established Scottish Church. It was still probably his intention, when this

training should have been completed, to return to America.

But the Aberdonian Fates were on the look-out for him. There chanced to die a certain Dr Donaldson, who was Professor of Oriental Languages in Marischal College, Aberdeen. The patronage of this office chanced to belong to a private Scottish gentleman, Sir Alexander Ramsay of Balmain; Hebraists were then probably not numerous in Scotland, and Kidd having been recommended to Sir Alexander, the chair was his. Sending to America for his wife and children, he went to Aberdeen in October 1793, when he was just thirty-two years of age. He began his duties that winter as LL.OO.P. in Marischal College, still as a layman, but,—the due amount of attendance on the theological lectures of his colleague, Principal Campbell of Marischal College, and of Dr Gerard of King's, having completed his theological courses begun in Edinburgh,—he was licensed by the Presbytery of Aberdeen, and became a preacher as well as a professor. For some years he held the post of lecturer in Trinity Chapel, a newly-built chapel in the Shiprow; but in 1801 the congregation of Gilcomston Chapel invited him to be their pastor, and thus brought him, at the age of forty, into the exact place fore-ordained for him, though he had reached it by so long a circumbendibus. It was not till 1818 that his American friends, with whom he still kept up a correspondence, sent him over a D.D. degree

from the College of New Jersey to add to his LL.OO.P., and so changed him, in popular nomenclature, from the Rev. Professor into the Rev. Dr Kidd.

I can hardly conceive a more incongruous insertion of a piece of fresh substance into a pre-existing element than must have been Kidd's first settlement among the Aberdonians. Everything must have been against him. He was Irish; and if there is any portion of Great Britain the population of which is the reverse of Irish, and where one might say *a priori* that no Irish need apply, or would find themselves at home if they did apply, it is Aberdeen and its neighbourhood. Then he was not only an Irishman, but, as it seemed, a restless Irishman. He had not gone through a regular education for the ministry in the routine way and at the usual age, but had been in America colleaguing with Portuguese Jews, and doing nobody knew what, and had been flung back again almost in mature manhood to be polished up in the ologies and turned into a parson! Now, the Aberdonians have faith in routine; they like all things done decently and in order, and where they have not the means of satisfying themselves by actual inquiry, they are apt to suspect that things may be wrong. To set against those difficulties in Kidd's way, there was certainly in his favour the fact that Sir Alexander Ramsay of Balmain had promoted him to the Hebrew Professorship. A Professor in

Aberdeen is a somebody socially, whatever he is Professor of; and as to the Professorship of Oriental Languages,—why, it was hardly to be expected in those days that a man could be found for the post who had not been going to and fro on the earth, and who had not some bee in his bonnet! So in his Professorship of Hebrew in Marischal College Kidd did have a start among the Aberdonians. As far as I know, however, it was not in any great degree by his activity in this capacity that he wove himself forward into that extraordinary and all-dominant popularity in the town which he ultimately attained, and which he had exercised long before I knew him in his old age. He is said, indeed, to have given a stimulus to the study of Hebrew in the north of Scotland; but, from what I have heard from students of his in the later days of his Professorship, I should infer that he had never been of the profoundest or most accurate as an Oriental scholar, and that, though he may have talked with a lax enthusiasm to his classes on matters of Hebrew grammar and Biblical interpretation, he had by that time been left behind as a Hebraist by younger pioneers.

But, in truth, Kidd as a teacher of Hebrew, Kidd among the points, was not the Kidd about whom the community cared, and in whose influence they came to revel. It was by his powers of pulpit-oratory, first brought to bear by him on the town in his five years of probationary evening-lecturing

in Trinity Chapel, and then transferred in 1801 to the great congregation of Gilcomston Chapel—it was by these powers of pulpit-oratory, exercised through a period of forty years, and by the force at the same time of a most vigorous and original personality, exerted in a thousand ways, and at first against violent opposition, on the miscellaneous economy of the town, that he had become the venerable and much-loved Dr Kidd whom I remember. He was then past his seventieth year, though still hale, and of unabated energy. He was far from rich in worldly goods, and had had his losses and difficulties, but, on the whole, he had made the ends meet. He had had sore family troubles, which were still matters of hushed rumour, but his buoyant spirit had surmounted them; and, save among the brutal, who have their snouts always in such matters, no reproach had, on this account, attached to him. And so, taking him as I remember him, let me mention some of the causes which, as I conceive, may have been concerned in transmuting the Irish stranger, who had arrived in Aberdeen in the old days of Beattie and Gerard and Campbell, into that venerable figure in whom the whole enlarged modern town felt a property, whose very scoldings of them seemed native Aberdonian breezes, and whose Irish origin had been so forgotten that his very name had become identified with that of the town, and people in the counties round spoke of him and thought of him as Dr Kidd of Aberdeen.

Moderatism and Evangelicalism have been very significant words in Scotland for several generations. Guelph and Ghibelline in mediæval Italy did not denote a more essential distinction than Moderate and Evangelical did in Scotland. It was a natural polarization. If you were not a Moderate you were an Evangelical, and if you were not an Evangelical you were a Moderate; and not the less were you the one or the other, although you might not yourself know which you were. To my shame be it said, it was not till I was older than I ought to have been that I received enlightenment as to this important distinction. It was not in fact till Kidd had been several years dead that I first heard of the distinction. How I escaped the knowledge so long is now a mystery to me, for I was not uninquisitive, and, although the names were unrevealed to me, I was in the midst of the double-bodied actuality. But so it was.

I first heard the words "Moderate" and "Evangelical," in their party sense when I joined a debating society, the discussions in which were often, though not exclusively, theological. The first evening of my membership, one of the older members, anxious for a vote on his side in the divisions that took place on the theological questions, sat down beside me, as a recruiting sergeant might, and asked coaxingly, "Are you an Evangelical or a Moderate?" It was a trying moment for a youngster anxious not to appear more green than

his neighbours. I remember I tried back mentally among the etymologies of the two adjectives to see if any light could be got by that process. But no light came. It seemed a decidedly good thing, even a splendid thing, to be an "Evangelical", but it did not seem a bad thing to be a "Moderate", and I could not see why the virtue involved in this respectable adjective should be excluded by an affection for the other. So I had presence of mind to extricate myself, *more Scotico*, by putting my mouth close to the ear of my questioner, and whispering "Which are you?" He told me right off, and with some passion, that he was a Moderate, as all sensible people were; and, as I knew him slightly, and had then a concrete specimen of Moderatism at my elbow, a glimmering dawned upon me, as I looked at him, of what Moderatism in the abstract might be. Not that I should not have been wrong if I had concluded that I knew the physiognomy of a Moderate once and forever from this one instance. This very person became afterwards an intense Evangelical, and even died a martyr, in some sense, to the service of his views of Evangelicism. He was one of the younger Free Church ministers after the Disruption; and, his charge then lying in a part of Dumfriesshire where the hostility of the landed proprietors to the Free Church denied building sites to the out-going congregations, and compelled them to worship in the open air, he met his death from exposure to rain and sleet in the performance of his duties.

While Chalmers was yet among the Moderates, nay, before he was a parish minister at all, there were scattered up and down in Scotland, ministers of the Evangelical sort, keeping alive within the Established Church that more fervid style of theological doctrine which had never ceased to be dear to the people, for the maintenance of which many of them had separated themselves from the Establishment, and which was again after a while to be in the ascendant all through the land. Among those pioneers of Evangelicalism in the days of prevailing Moderatism, was Dr Kidd. By his Irish nature, by the abiding recollection of the form of Christianity he had learnt in his childhood, or by whatever else of deeper influence may have operated, Kidd, as soon as he began to preach, could preach nothing else than a kind of Whitefieldism, and even a very warm and rich kind of Whitefieldism. It mattered not that he was in the city of Campbell and Gerard, and that these had been his instructors in theology. Only this kind of doctrine could he preach if he preached at all.

Anywhere in Scotland a mode of Evangelical preaching so rich, hearty, and warm as Kidd's must have been from the first, would probably have then been an innovation; but in that Aberdonian region it must have been a marvel. Nowhere in Scotland was there such a vast stone bed of uninterrupted Moderatism. Among the native clergy of the shire there were many specimens of Moderatism at its

best. There were among them excellent and strong-headed men of great natural piety, controlling the manners of their neighbours most creditably, and preaching sermons of good shrewd matter. But uniformly the theology had come to be of the frigid kind; and in many parishes the doctrine expounded had come to have so faint a tincture of theology of any sort in it that, but for a few phrases and forms, any decent pagan who had read Marcus Aurelius would have answered for the parson.

It would have astonished Buckle, with his strange notion of Scotland as a country where theology had always been hissing hot, to hear some of the many stories still current about the theology of the Aberdeenshire lairds and the Aberdeenshire Moderate ministers. "My friends," said one worthy from the pulpit to his little congregation of rustics; "We are told that it is a wrong thing to tell a lee; and I'll no deny, in a general way, that it is; but there's one thing that I'm sure of, and that is, that there can be nae ill in telling a lee if it's to haud down din" (*i.e.* if it is to prevent scandal or disturbance). A doctrine this which might have something to say for itself; but hardly the kind of doctrine that it was necessary to set up a Church for, or that it required the events of Judæa to bring within the compass of human understanding!

Now the Irish Kidd had come into the very midst of this kind of doctrinal element. Among clergy-

men judiciously advising their flocks that, though it might be sin in a general way to tell a lie, it could be no sin if it were to prevent disturbance and keep the peace, *he* stood up in the pulpit as a force of a new kind, speaking to men of such mysteries as the person and the offices of Christ, of original sin, of God's grace to mankind, of a future state of eternal reprobation for the wicked, and a heaven in God's presence for the saints. "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world": "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest": these and a thousand other Biblical texts he quoted and again quoted, he expounded, he exhausted of their marrow. And they heard him; those hard-headed Aberdonians heard him. Even for them these transcendentalisms, warmly uttered by the Irishman, had a subtle softness that disintegrated their moral granite. First, crowds of the poorer sort flocked to hear him in his evening lectures in Trinity Chapel; and then the great congregation of Gilcomston Chapel, still mainly of the poorer sort, elected him as the man from whom they could hear a really moving Gospel.

And among them for thirty years he laboured, thrice every Sunday administering to them, with warm Irish vehemence, some special bit of Biblical narrative or doctrine, which he had ruminated, collated, methodized into heads, allegorized into occult meanings, and always melted into intense applicability to the needs and uses of those whom he addressed; and

ere long, the taste for this kind of preaching spread beyond his own congregation, till the whole city became in the main evangelical in its notions of doctrine, and the other pulpits in it were filled with men supplying similar doctrine after their various fashions, and only in the country round did Moderatism still prevail, though even there largely modified. All this was not owing to Kidd, for the *Zeit-geist* was at work, but much of it was owing to him. He was a flame at which many lit their candles. And it was probably because in the city and all around Kidd, Evangelicalism had so come to be normal at the time of which I write, that the notion of any formal contrary in theological sentiment remained unknown to me.

But what Kidd did was not accounted for simply by his being an Evangelical and an Irishman. There might have been many an Evangelical, Irish or Scottish, from whose similar activity in the circumstances no such results would have come. There were extraordinary points about Kidd. He had a good strong head on his shoulders, full of a kind of confused lore of his own. He had a great avidity for information and new lights on all subjects, and every now and then would be seized with some speculative maggot, or a fit of enthusiasm for some research, as when he betook himself, after his sixtieth year, to Dr Thomas Brown's system of Moral Philosophy; or again, some years later, to Political Economy; and had private classes at his

own house for lectures on these subjects. Hence he was always refreshing himself with new matter and new imagery, and, Biblical to the core as his sermons were, and with chains of texts running through them, there would frequently come into a sermon a stroke of excellent moral philosophy for the million, or a flash of unexpected secular illustration. He had a rich and ready wit; he had an abundant flow of simple and perspicuous, yet choice, English, never bombastic, but often of fine poetic elevation; and he had a beautiful, even consummate, Irish elocution. This last must have given him, among the Aberdonians, something of the power of an artist. To them he was a real Chrysostom. His slow and impressive reading of the Psalms was a never-failing source of admiration and delight; and I remember particularly his Irish pronunciation of the pronoun *her*. From his mouth it was a rich *hur*, in which both the aspirate and the rough consonant had full justice done them.

But, above all, Kidd knew men and things. His wanderings and residence in America, his early adventures in quest of a livelihood, and his acquaintance with different classes of men, had left in his mind a fund of various and shrewd recollections more considerable than usual. Dr Rush's advice to him, "Study men and things", had been followed. Though childish-hearted and full of impulse, he was very wide-awake, could see through people as well as most, was a master of all the little duplicities and

vanities of ordinary people, and scented a hypocrite at the first sight of him. He was a man of the world, if not in the sense of being able always to manage his own affairs, at least in the sense of knowing how affairs ought to be managed. Especially he had the condition and habits of the poor at his fingers' ends. How he went about in his great pastoral district of over 10,000 souls chiefly of the middle and poorer classes! How he crossed the thresholds of the poorest, and knew their household ways and surroundings, their humours, their domestic troubles, and their besetting vices! How he watched the incidents of the streets, and reproduced them in his sermons, with comments that went home! How, at one time, at a humble wedding in the house of one of his parishioners, he would make the company happy by waiting a little after the ceremony, sitting down at the table and drinking a glass of porter to the bride's health—which strange nuptial beverage had, by a stroke of inventive genius, been got ready beforehand, as the likeliest to suit the Doctor, in case he should so honour the occasion! How, at another time, with a poor woman just out of a fever leaning on his arm, he would be seen in some mean neighbourhood making a round of the shops for small necessary purchases! Thus he had come to know the poor familiarly; and it was no vague grasp of them that he took from the pulpit, but the grasp of one who had all the chords at his touch. His style, as I

have said, was wonderfully perspicuous. I do not believe that he ever preached a sermon without being understood by the poorest of his hearers.

Still I find I have not imaged Kidd to others up to my own recollections of him. Good-humoured, and even so habitually humoursome that most times he carried laughter with him into any week-day company (though it behoved always to be laughter of his own making, and had there been an attempt to laugh *at* him, his majesty would soon have turned the tables),—with all this, his dominant quality was courage. Nor was it passive courage. It was very active courage, the courage of a constitutional pugnacity, that considered fighting a man's business, and looked out for objects of attack. "Wherever you see a head, hit it," is the well-known advice of the Irishman to his friend; and, if by "head" we understand "anything unlikeable", Kidd was a model Irishman in this too. Take the following opening passage from a sermon of his, preached April 3rd 1797,—*i.e.*, while he was not yet member of Gilcomston Chapel, but only evening lecturer in the Shiprow Chapel,—on the text, Eccles. v. 5, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow than that thou shouldest vow and not pay":—

"My Brethren,—It never was, nor is it, my desire to make the pulpit a scorner's chair, or to gratify private resentment by taking an unmanly advantage of the place where I stand; and yet I suspect there is an individual here this evening against whom, I promptly declare, I have composed the discourse which I am now about to deliver. Now, that it may not be said that I have

deviated from candour, honesty and fidelity, or that I have brought 'a railing accusation' against anyone, I call upon you, aged fathers! and upon you, discerning men and brethren! and upon you, ye female part of my audience, whom I should have named first! to ponder well what I shall say—to weigh, with Christian impartiality, the force of my arguments—and to declare the truth when ye leave this house. 'Ye are witnesses of these things.' I cast myself upon the whole of this assembly, and for once request attention, without the disturbance of coughing or throat-clearing which so frequently obstructs both speaking and hearing. As in the Divine Presence, then, we shall proceed."

Against what flagrant scandal of backsliding or of breach of promise, in Aberdeen, more than one hundred years ago, Kidd thus spoke out, I do not know; nor can it be gathered in the least from the sermon. One can fancy some culprit in one of the pews, the cynosure of the thoughts of all, and with what shivering he sat the sermon out. Or the passage may have been only a solemn stroke of Kidd's wit, to arrest the attention of all, and to make each one think himself the particular rascal aimed at. I have quoted it to suggest that characteristic of Kidd which accompanied him through life, and even grew by years of practice, in the pulpit and out of it, until it was abnormally developed; and in his older years he became a very Turk for explosive irascibility.

In those years, he was the incarnation of the opposite of our modern principle of non-interference. Whatever he did not like he spoke out against at once, and loudly. And it so chanced that there were many things, both small and great, that he

did not like. He did not like to see people loitering about the church door; indeed, it was one of his habits to be in the pulpit always when the bell began to ring, and to watch the people taking their places during the half-hour before service; and once, on coming up to a small group who chanced to be at the church door very early, and were innocently exchanging salutations, and perhaps a little neighbourly gossip, he dispersed it roughly, with, "What devil's committee are you holding here?—Get in, get in!"

He had a particular aversion to seeing persons asleep in church, a thing which would sometimes happen in drowsy weather, even in his audience. He had the eye of a hawk for any offender in this respect in his vast congregation; and every third or fourth Sunday there would be an interruption of the sermon:—

"Wake up, sir! wake up!" he would call out. "There will be no sleeping in Hell!"

And once, by way of variation, I remember hearing something of this sort:—

"You, sir; No. 3 in the second seat from the front in the top loft. What are you asleep for? . . . Rouse him up! . . . Wont he wake? . . . Rouse him up, his next neighbour!"

At such moments, there would be an arrest of the attention of the congregation, even a titter, when the oddity of the incident was greater than usual; but straightway all would be solemnity again. Nor

at his greatest oddities was the feeling other than that of awe at the outbreaks of an irritated King Lear. In his earlier days in Aberdeen he must have had vehement personal critics and enemies. But he had tossed and gored them, or they had died off, or gone into corners; and one heard of them chiefly in connexion with a Gilcomston legend, that no one that had opposed the Doctor had ever prospered. So, in his later years, his combativeness was left free for impersonal antagonisms—for fighting with Aberdonian evils close at hand, or with wild beasts at Ephesus. As a true Irish Protestant, he had a special detestation of the Papacy, and of Popery in all its manifestations; and there were, of course, opportunities, even away from his pulpit, when this blazed out. A story runs that, during one anti-Popery paroxysm in the town, when meetings were being held and squibs were flying in the Protestant interest, Kidd chanced to meet the Roman Catholic priest on the Schoolhill; and, being on good enough terms with him save where religion was concerned, saluted him thus, some yards off:—

"Hillo! Priest Fraser; tell me this, What difference is there between Christ's mother and my mother?"

Only on this occasion, if the story is true, was the Doctor ever vanquished. For the priest, coming up to him, had said quietly:—

"I don't know, Doctor; but the difference is very great between the sons."

The story may not be true; for many myths had gathered round Kidd in his lifetime; and many tales that I have heard told of him I have since found to have been floating traditions about Rowland Hill or other eccentric clerics; they had been fathered on Kidd from a feeling of their fitness.

Not only did Kidd detest Popery: he denounced Socinianism. An avowed live Socinian in Gilcomston was an impossibility. But every man must have his pastimes; and one of Kidd's was to fore-exercise the Gilcomstonians against every conceivable invasion of the Anti-Trinitarian heresy. Coming more home to them perhaps, though any practical application was also a long way off, was his vehement ecclesiastical Whiggism, showing itself in his Anti-Patronage philippics and what, had he lived a little longer, would have been called his Non-Intrusionist zeal.

He was a Whig, also, in secular politics. On the accession of George IV. to the throne, he had prayed openly for him in this wise:—

"Grant, O Lord, that he may be a better King than he has been a Prince Regent!"

And when, even in Kidd's privileged case, the local authorities—who were mostly Tories, and had ranged themselves against Queen Caroline—thought themselves obliged to make some inquiry respecting so daring an utterance, Kidd's answer had non-plussed them:—

"And where's the man that can't improve?"

In short, in this as in everything else at last, Kidd was best left alone. Non-intervention! You should have known Dr Kidd! Take him even in his walks within the bounds of Aberdeen, and he was in his own person worth a police force to the town. At the time when vaccination was coming in, the popular prejudice being strongly against it, Kidd had not only lectured on the subject from the pulpit, and employed a medical man to vaccinate at intimated times those whom he had thus persuaded, but, finding this not enough, had compelled scores into his own house like sheep, and vaccinated them himself. Vaccination by *his* hands *must* be free from harm! If there were a fray in any street as Kidd was passing, he was in the middle of it in a moment. Not if it were a legitimate fray, such as a mere frolic of snow-balling among the Marischal College students on a wintry day. On any such occasion, when the Doctor appeared in the College yard, and the students would stop their snow-balling reverently to let him pass, his good-humoured cry to them, greeted with their admiring cheers, would be, "Heave away, lads, never mind me!" But if it were a brutish fray, with real savagery in it, then, I say, he would be in the middle of it, a white-haired justice. And, where his tongue failed on such an occasion—which it rarely did—his umbrella would be in requisition. The scamps knew their man, and would make off loweringly, their heads bent, and their hands deep in their pockets.

Even alcohol, the chief fiend of Aberdeen, as of all the rest of Scotland, was no match for the Doctor. He has been seen driving all the way before him up Skene Street a drunken parishioner on whom he had pounced, and whom he was bent on seeing home, the man going as meekly as a lamb, in spite of the epithets from all Irish parts of the vocabulary with which the Doctor was pursuing him, and the occasional thwack of the Doctor's umbrella on his back. Let some drunken fellow have been beating his wife, and the rumour of the Doctor's coming, or the mere threat of sending for him, would have been the most potent thing in Aberdeen to cow and quiet the brute. But it was not only drunkenness and its consequences that roused the irascibility of the Doctor. Any meanness or cruelty would do it; or (and here was his excess) any unlovely thing whatever that encountered him inauspiciously. For example, once, as he was going on a Fast-Day morning through a part of the town where were gardens and hedges, he came, it is said, upon a well-known professional bird-catcher, plying his vagabond craft with his limed twigs and lines all in operation, and the cages waiting for the captives; when, startled with loathing at such a desecration of Nature's quiet, the Doctor dashed at the lines and traps, liberated the captive linnets, broke the cages, and chased the scared offender a full quarter of a mile from the spot.

But there was one thing that always moved him

to his most violent indignation: the sight of a mother misusing her little ones by her own street-door, or giving them over with imprecations to the devil. Woe to the woman whom the Doctor came upon so engaged! Such horrors must have been frequent in mean neighbourhoods in Aberdeen, they made so particular an impression on him; for often in his sermons, but more especially in his addresses to the parents who, after every service, stood up in the lectern, under the white-clothed christening-basin, to have their month-old infants baptized before the whole congregation, he would allude to this cursing of children by their parents; and he would make an extraordinary text of it. Everything that the Doctor saw was turned to account in his pulpit; and his love for children, and for the young generally, was his ruling softness.

One might, I suppose, look in vain, even in the depths of the British Museum, for copies of Kidd's published works. Yet Dr Kidd did write books. A volume of his Gilcomston sermons was printed by him in his lifetime, and another volume, of skeletons of sermons, was printed after his death. There was a pamphlet on the Rights and Liberties of the Church, as violated by the Usurpation of Patronage; a Catechism for the Young, on approaching the Communion Table for the First Time; and there was a Treatise on Infant Baptism. His *Opera Magna* were his Essay on the Doctrine of the Trinity, and his Dissertation on the Eternal Son-

ship of Christ. These would not now, I fancy, bite anywhere into contemporary theological speculation. The first cannot be regarded as anything more than the action of an ingenious Irish mind whirling *in vacuo*, and the second is a laboriously-reasoned argument against a subtle form of Arianism or semi-Arianism ; though this has, I observe, been recently thought worthy of reproduction in Scotland, with high recommendation of its doctrinal merits. What struck me in this treatise, almost to my own surprise, was the singular finish of style; an elegance and neatness in the concatenation of thoughts and clauses, in which the keenest knife-edge could hardly detect a flaw.

And so, looking back upon the Doctor as he lived, I am sure that, even in æsthetic respects, he must have been a power among the Aberdonians. I can see how, with his finished style and his rich Irish elocution, added as external graces to all his hot moral energy, he must have been a kind of local Aaron and Moses in one, and how it happened that his vast squably-built chapel on Gilcomston heights had become, in addition to all else that it was, a kind of intellectual and literary gymnasium for the inhabitants of Aberdeen. There they sat on Sundays, in daylight or in candle-light, a densely-packed mass of between two and three thousand human beings—old red-cloaked women and decrepit old men in the passages or on the pulpit-stairs, and a general congregation of young and old in the

ground pews and the gallery pews. The men were in as large proportion as the women, and there was as considerable a sprinkling of tough-headed fellows among the men as you were likely to find anywhere. All this miscellaneous audience hung in reverence on the Doctor's lips. Their week-day conditions might have been hard and meagre; but here at least they were above penury; here their souls could be set a-glow; here they heard of things unearthly; here they were in a world of ideas, and felt the glimmerings of the Celestial City. And strangers would be there, too, attracted by the fame of the Doctor's oratory, and divinity students, anxious to catch hints as to the manner in which to address a popular congregation. And what mattered it if the Doctor would go off now and then into his Trinitarian metaphysics, and his visionary interpretations of the Apocalypse? Even in such matters Kidd made himself intelligible; and for the hardest-headed old fellow who had haggled over his bargain to a penny yesterday, and would haggle to a half-penny to-morrow, there was a temporary expansion of being, in knowing all about the Millennium. What it was to be, the Doctor hardly ventured to say; but about the time that it was due, he had no doubt. *He* should not live to see it, he often said; but many then hearing him would! It was to be in 186–; unfortunately, I forget the last digit. And Gilcomston believed him, because he believed it himself. I should like also to have an affidavit

taken in and about Aberdeen as to another prophecy of the Doctor's. Unless I mistake, there are alive some still in those parts who could attest with me that he used to say over and over again, about the years 1830-1834, that Europe was to have another terrible Napoleon, *of the same name*, treading in the footsteps of the first. How on earth he had worked out this conjecture, I do not know; but Aberdeen in the 'thirties had this opportunity, I can vouch, for being wiser than the rest of the world.

What a mourning there was in the town when Dr Kidd died! The event was sudden. He had been ailing for a day or two; but, on Tuesday, the 23rd of December 1834, he persisted in going to meet his Hebrew class in Marischal College. On his return walk home he fell down in apoplexy. The news ran like a shock through the town; and the next day Aberdeen knew that it had lost "the Doctor." His body lay in state for a week, and the immense length of the funeral procession that followed it to the grave has always remained in my memory. I remember looking down into his grave before the interment: it was solidly cased with brick. It struck me as a peculiarity—they would save all that remained of such a man as long as they could. And they were right.

And I, too, at this distance of time, would fain build my little brick wall around the memory of this man. But what is the use? Had he been an

imaginary hero of romance, people might not have objected to hear of him. But he was only a real man, an Evangelical minister, of Irish birth, who lived and laboured long ago in the north of Scotland!

CHAPTER X

THE ABERDEEN GRAMMAR SCHOOL—DR MELVIN

THE Schoolhill in Aberdeen, a street of oldish houses, derived its name from the public Grammar School of the town. There had been a Grammar School in the burgh, on or near this same site, for centuries; and in the records of the town frequent mention is made of this school, and of the names of its masters.

The school in my time was a plain, dingy building, which had been erected, I believe, in 1757, and which, if it was superior to some of its predecessors in not being thatched with heather, but slated, and quite weather-tight, was certainly nothing to look at architecturally. Within a gateway and iron-railed wall, separating the school from the street, and forming a very limited playground in front, stood the low main building of a single storey, parallel with the street, and having a door with stone steps in the middle, and windows at the sides; and from this main building there projected towards the street two equally low wings forming the two junior class-rooms. Two similar wings, which could not well be seen from the street, projected from the main building behind, and accommodated the senior

classes. The only entrance to the two back class-rooms was through the public school; the two front class-rooms might also be entered through the public school, but had separate doors from the front play-ground. The arrangements inside were simple enough. Each of the four oblong class-rooms had a raised desk for the master in one angle and two rows of "factions" as they were called—wooden seats, with narrow sloping writing-benches in front of them—along the two sides of the oblong, so as to leave a free passage of some width in the middle for the master, when he chose to walk from end to end. Each "faction" was constructed to hold four boys; so that the look of a full class-room was that of a company of boys seated in two parallel sub-divisions of fours along the walls. In the public school, where meetings of all the classes together took place for general purposes, the main desk, a wooden structure of several tiers, was in the middle of the long side of the oblong, immediately opposite the main door; and there were four sets of somewhat larger "factions," where the several classes sat on such occasions, all looking inwards.

The entire accommodation internally, as well as the look externally, was of the dingiest; nor was it, perhaps, very creditable to the town that, even in the middle of the eighteenth century, they should not have risen to a somewhat loftier idea of the sort of building suitable for a school that was already historical among them, and was still likely to be of

importance. But boys think little of those things; and the low, dingy building had for them many happy, and some venerable associations. In those rows of "factions," which they thumped energetically with sticks and fists at every meeting, making an uproar till the masters appeared, and over which at other times they leaped in a thousand fashions of chase and mutual fight, roaring out such tags of traditional school-doggrel as

> "Qui loupavit ower the factions
> Solvet down a saxpence,"

they could not but have a dim idea that generations of young Aberdonians, either long defunct and in their graves, or scattered abroad in mature living manhood, had sat and made uproar before them. The very tags of doggrel they shouted had come down to them from these predecessors; and in the appearance of the "factions" themselves, all slashed and notched and carved over with names and initials of various dates deeply incised into the hard wood, there was a provocation to some degree of interest in the legend of the school. It was not in the nature of boyish antiquarianism to go back to the times of those older heather-thatched school-buildings, ancestors of the present, in which the Cargills and the Wedderburns, and other early Scottish Latinists of note, had walked as masters; but some of the traditions of the existing fabric in the days of recent masters, whose names and

characters were still proverbial, were within the reach of the least inquisitive.

Among these traditions, by far the most fascinating was that of Lord Byron's connexion with the school. When, in 1792, Byron's mother had separated from her husband, the profligate Captain Byron of the Guards, she—by birth a Miss Gordon of Gicht in Aberdeenshire—had retired to Aberdeen with her little lame London-born boy, then not quite five years old, and with about £130 a year saved from her fortune, which her husband had squandered. The little fellow, living with his mother in the Broadgate, and catching up the Aberdeen dialect which he never quite forgot, learnt his first lessons from two or three private tutors in succession, the last of whom he mentions as "a very serious, saturnine, but kind young man, named Patterson", the son of his shoemaker, but a good scholar. "With him", he says, "I began Latin in Ruddiman's Grammar, and continued till I went to the Grammar School (*Scotice* 'Schule,' *Aberdonice* 'Squeel') where I threaded all the classes to the fourth, when I was recalled to England, where I had been hatched, by the demise of my uncle."

The fact thus lightly mentioned by Byron was, as may be supposed, no small splendour in the annals of Aberdeen. In my boyhood there were many alive in the town who remembered the lame boy well, and some who had been his school-fellows. We used to fancy the "faction" in which he had

oftenest sat; and there was no small search for his name or initials, reported to be still visible, cut by his own hand, on one of the "factions"—always, I believe, without success. One school legend about him greatly impressed us. It was said that, on his coming to school the first morning after his accession to the peerage was known, and on the calling out of his name in the catalogue no longer as "Georgi Gordon Byron" but as "Georgi, Baro de Byron," he did not reply with the usual and expected "Adsum," but, feeling the gaze of all his school-fellows, burst into tears and ran out. But there are half a hundred Aberdeen myths about Byron, and this may be one of them.

The school was a grammar school in the old sense of the term as understood in England as well as in Scotland. It was exclusively a day school for classical education in preparation for the University. In fact, down to my time, it was all but entirely a Latin School. The rudiments of Greek had recently been introduced as part of the business of the higher classes; but, with this exception, and with the further exception that, in teaching Latin, the masters might regale their classes with whatever little bits of history or of general lore they could blend with their Latin lessons, the business of the school was Latin, Latin, Latin. Since that time there have been changes in the constitution of the school to suit it to the requirements of a more modern education; but in those days it was Latin,

nothing but a four or five years' perseverance in Latin, within those dingy old walls. Although the usual age at which boys entered the school was from eight to twelve, it was assumed that the necessary preliminary learning of English, writing, and arithmetic had been gone through beforehand; and, though there were public schools for writing, drawing, and mathematics, equally with the Grammar School under the charge of the city authorities, which the pupils of the Grammar School might attend at distinct hours for parallel instruction in those branches, those schools were not attached to the Grammar School, and attendance at them was quite optional. So, on the whole, if you were an Aberdeen boy, getting the very best education known in the place, you were committed, at the age of from nine to eleven, to a four or five years' course of drilling in Latin, five hours every day, save in the single vacation month of July, tipped only with a final touch of Greek; and, this course over, you were expected, at the age of from thirteen to sixteen, either to walk forward into the University, or, if that prospect did not then suit you, to slip aside, a scholar so far, into the world of business. A four or five years' course I have said; for, though the full curriculum was five years, it was quite customary for readier or more impatient lads to leap to the University from the fourth class.[1]

[1] Among my father's dictated Memories is the following account of his previous schools in Aberdeen:—

This exclusive, or all but exclusive, dedication of the school to Latin was partly a matter of fidelity to tradition; but there was a special cause for it in the circumstances of the intellectual system of

"The first date I remember writing is January 1, 1828. I was then five years and one month old, and could write quite well. I remember that it was quite an easy, ordinary thing to write it: I had probably written for about two years before that.

"At the first school I went to we used to write in the sand, in a sort of trough. It was a school kept by a man, and I used to be piloted across the road to it. It was in an entry, and up a wooden stair—a flight of wooden stairs; and I used to be left at the bottom of the stairs, to go up by myself. One day when I went, I found that there were no stairs there. It was a kind of a revelation. A carpenter was repairing them, and had taken them away; and as I stood gazing, he lifted me up.

"The next school I went to was a 'wifie's' school. She was a superior woman. I remember her son had enlisted, and while I was at the school he came home, and on one occasion he amused himself by making me read aloud to him a poem by Wilson the ornithologist, who used to write verses before he took to ornithology. It was about a wife, Maggie, who was a shrew, and her husband grew so tired of her that he threatened to go away; and then she turned over a new leaf; and the poem ended with some lines about Maggie being the best wife that 'ever went in shoon,' or something to that effect. And when it came to the crisis I was so affected that I broke into tears—and that was what he got me to read it for; I suppose it amused him.

"The next school was Mr Riach's school. It was a higher-aiming school, where the children of good families went, and there was a kind of probationer who taught the smaller boys. He taught them very well, and kept very good order. But I remember going up to Mr Riach himself one day, and asking if I might be moved up into the higher class; and when he asked 'why?' I said—'Because I want to read about "The Cannons thundering on the way to Rome."' I suppose I had heard them reading something about Napoleon. I was at this time about 5 years old.

"The next school was Mestin's school. It was a mixed school, for boys and girls, and there I had a lassie for a rival. I always remember that one day she kept me interested in a story about a mouse; and all the time she was watching her chance; and I was so interested that I let the master's question pass me, and she answered it; and so she got above me—but of course that was only for a day."

F. M.

the town, and indeed in that whole region of the north of Scotland of which the town was the natural capital. The school was the main feeder of the adjacent Marischal College and University of the city of Aberdeen; and it also sent pupils annually, though not in such great numbers, to the other and neighbouring University of King's College, Old Aberdeen. These two Universities, now united into one, were the Universities to which, for geographical reasons, all the scholarly youths of that region of Scotland which lay beyond the ranges of attraction of the other three Scottish Universities, were naturally drawn. Whatever lad looked forward to a University education in this northern and north-eastern region of Scotland, thought of Aberdeen, and of one or other of its two Universities, as his destination while that education should be going on. The tendency from the Highland, and generally from the more northerly districts, was rather to King's College; while from Aberdeen itself, the eastern and lowland parts of Aberdeenshire, and from Kincardineshire and Forfarshire, the tendency was rather to Marischal College.

But to whichever of the two Universities the predisposition might be, the possibility of giving effect to it was, for many who cherished it, a matter of long preliminary anxiety. There were in that region of North Britain many well-to-do families, perfectly able to send their sons to either of the two Aberdonian Colleges, or even, if they so preferred,

to Edinburgh or either of the English Universities; but in that region, more perhaps than in any other even of North Britain, there has always been a numerous class of whom it may be said, in Sydney Smith's sense, *Musam tenui meditantur avenâ*;—they cultivate the Muse, or the best rough Muse they find accessible, on a little oatmeal. In other words, the ambition after a University education existed among a wider and poorer class in that region than is found to cherish a similar ambition elsewhere. The town of Aberdeen is included in this statement. The notion of a University education as possible descended very far down indeed among the ranks of that community,—far below the level of those families who could sustain by their own means the very moderate expense that was necessary with the University actually at their doors. To what is this to be attributed? Partly, if you so choose, to the breed of the folk, but considerably, at least, to a more palpable social cause. This desire for a University education exists there so widely, penetrates there so deep down in society, because in that region, more than in any other part of Great Britain, the means have existed from time immemorial for gratifying that desire. I refer to the Bursary System,—a system which I hope still exists.

But what is a bursary, and what is or was the Bursary system of that Aberdonian region of Scotland? A bursary, in Scottish academic phraseology,

is what a scholarship or exhibition is in English—a small annual stipend granted to a lad going to college, out of funds bequeathed for the purpose, and tenable by him while he is at college. All the Scottish Universities have such bursaries at their disposal, founded by lovers of learning in past centuries; but the two Aberdeen Universities were peculiar in this (St Andrews' alone, I think, coming near them in the practice), that the greater number of the bursaries were put up annually for open competition to all comers. There were other private bursaries in the gift of certain families, or of the professors, and bestowable by favour, or on the bearers of certain names; but each of the two colleges—King's and Marischal—had about twenty public bursaries to be disposed of every October by open competition. The bursaries were of small amounts, ranging from £5 a year to £20 a year; but invariably, by the terms of the foundation, each bursary more than covered all the expenses of the college classes.

Now, it was this Bursary system,—as familiarly known over the whole region concerned as the Aurora Borealis in its nightly sky,—it was this Bursary system that had generated and that sustained there a habit of looking forward to a University education among classes in which otherwise such a habit could have hardly been possible. Though the well-to-do youths in the town and in the country around might not care for a bursary,

save for the honour,—and it *was* reputed an honour, and, when obtained, was kept as such by many to whom it could have been of no substantial consideration,—yet, for a scholarly boy of poor family in one of the streets of Aberdeen, or for a poor farmer's son on Donside, following his father's plough, and dreaming of a college life as the furrow came to the field's edge, the thought that would murmur to his lips would still be "A bursary: oh, for a bursary!" With many, their going or not going to college depended on their winning or not winning, at the proper time, this coveted prize.

One can see what influence such an agency could have exercised over the schooling and intellectual activity of the region within which it operated; how, just as the India and Civil Service competitions have affected the education of the whole country in these days, and swayed it in particular directions according to the subjects set for the competitions, so, on a smaller scale, even the frugal Bursary system of the north-east of Scotland might have been managed so as to stimulate, within its range of action, not one but many kinds of study. After the time of which I now speak, there *was* a change to this effect in the administration of the bursaries, and they were conferred after an examination testing proficiency of different kinds. But, down to the time with which I have here to do, the competition for bursaries at both colleges was solely in Latin, and even mainly in one particular practice of Latin

scholarship,—the turning of a piece of English into Latin. The competition took place with great ceremony every October, in the halls of the two colleges. All who chose might come, and no questions were asked. A lad from Cornwall or from Kent, who had never been in Aberdeen before, might have entered the hall on competition-day, taken his place with the rest, and fought for a bursary with whatever force of Cornwall Latin or of Kent Latin was in him. The temptation was not such, however, as to attract many such outsiders; and it was generally some forty Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire, Forfarshire, Banffshire, or Highland lads, out of about 160 who had assembled in Aberdeen for the competition, that were made happy by obtaining the bursaries of the year.

How far back in time the influence of the Bursary system had been in operation in the territory, I do not know; but I should not wonder if it were to turn out, on investigation, that some form of the influence had to do with what is, at all events, the fact,—that for more than two centuries Aberdeen and the region around had had a special reputation in Scotland for eminence in Latinity. The greatest Scottish Latinist, or, at least, Latin poet, after Buchanan, had been Arthur Johnston, born near Aberdeen in 1587, and educated at Marischal College; his *Parerga*, *Epigrammata*, and other Latin poems were first given to the world, between 1628 and 1632, from the Aberdeen printing-press; and

among his fellow-contributors to the famous *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*, or collection of Latin poems by living or recently-deceased Scottish authors, printed at Amsterdam in 1637, several of the best, after himself, were also Aberdonians and Marischal College men. From that time Aberdeen had kept up the tradition of Latin scholarship.

My readers may like to know what was the expense of education at this Aberdeen Grammar School about which, and its connexions with a paltry bit of the land of oatmeal, I have been making so absurd a fuss. Ten shillings and sixpence a quarter for each boy: that was the expense. Even that was grumbled at by some as too dear, and it was a rise from what had formerly been the rate. Ten shillings and sixpence a quarter for the very best classical school education that was to be had, for love or money, in all that area of Scotland! The wealthiest and most aristocratic parent, if he kept his son on the spot, could not, by any desire, do better for him, in the way of schooling, than send him to precisely this school, the historical school of the place. The sons of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, were there mixed,—all on the equal platform of ten and sixpence a quarter,—save that, if a boy was lucky enough to be named Dun he paid nothing. Add six and sixpence a quarter for attendance at Mr Craigmyle's writing-school, and six and sixpence a quarter for attendance at Mr James Gordon's mathematical school,—at which two

public schools it was usual for the Grammar School boys to take instruction at separate hours,—and you have the almost total school expense for each boy as under five and twenty shillings a quarter. Extras, such as French, German, Fencing, Music, and other Kickshaws, were then very rare indeed in Aberdeen; they were to be had, I know, but it was as turtle and champagne were to be had. As for dancing, Heaven only knows how Aberdeen boys whom I have since seen reel-dancing magnificently as full-grown men in Hanover Square Rooms, came by the rudiments of that accomplishment. I believe it was done by many at dead of night, on creaky floors in out-of-the-way places in the Gallowgate, with scouts on the outlook for the clergy.

The only difference in the matter of the expense between the wealthier and the poorer boys attending the Grammar School was that the former generally had private tutors, who went to their houses in the evening to assist them in preparing their lessons. Such supplementary private tuition was cheap enough. A guinea a quarter for each evening hour so spent was what many a Divinity student was glad to earn; and two guineas a quarter was the maximum. It is a curious illustration of the difference of tariff that existed in those pre-railway days between different portions of the country not far distant from each other, that the rate of payment for exactly the same kind of private tuition in Edinburgh was then two guineas a month, or three

times the Aberdeen rate. By a migration from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, if it could be managed, and pupils bespoken, an Aberdonian dependent on teaching might at once triple his income. This attraction did operate, among other things, in turning Aberdonians southwards. It was an unfortunate thing for England; for, once in Edinburgh, the Pict might not stop there.

But my hero is waiting. A word or two more from Byron shall introduce him. "The Grammar School," says Byron in his reminiscences of his Aberdeen boyhood, "might consist of a hundred and fifty of all ages under age. It was divided into five classes, taught by four masters, the chief teaching the fourth and fifth himself." Save that the number of pupils had increased to between two and three hundred, this description of the Aberdeen Grammar School in Byron's time holds good as I remember it. The three under-masters then were Mr Watt, Mr Forbes, and Mr John Dun. Watt and Forbes, or as they were called irreverently, "Wattie" and "Chuckle," were two old men,—one white-haired and feeble, the other tougher, leaner, and with a brown wig,—whose days of efficiency, which may have begun with the century, were now over. As each of the under-masters carried his class on for three years continuously, and then handed it over as the fourth class to the care of the chief master or rector, himself going back to receive the new entrants, it was not uncommon for careful parents

to keep back their boys till it was Mr Dun's turn to assume the first class. He was a much younger man than the other two, kept splendid order, and was, indeed, a most excellent teacher. His class was usually twice or three times as large as that of Forbes or Watt, commencing at eighty or ninety strong in the first year, and always debouching at the end of the third year into the rector's charge, not only well kept up in numbers, but so well trained that each third year wave of "Dun's scholars," as they were called, was welcomed by the rector as his most hopeful material.

The name of this rector of the Aberdeen Grammar School was Dr James Melvin. For some years of his connexion with the school he had been simply James Melvin, A.M.; but the degree of LL.D. had been conferred on him by Marischal College. He was also a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, and on rare occasions would occupy the pulpit for one of his friends; but he did not usually figure as a clergyman, or place the designation "The Rev." before his name. Melvin lived in Belmont Street, close by the Grammar School, his bachelor household being presided over by his good old mother and his devoted sister; and a very conspicuous member of the household was a splendid and sagacious Newfoundland dog called Cæsar. Every morning Melvin stepped over to the school, Cæsar bounding before him as far as the school gate. There he spent three hours every forenoon, and

again two hours every afternoon in teaching the two senior classes in the right-hand back class-room; and during each winter session at Marischal College, where there was then no regular or endowed Latin chair, he did additional duty as Lecturer in Latin,—"Lecturer in Humanity" it was called, according to that strange hyperbole of our forefathers which viewed Latin as "Literæ Humaniorum," the literature of the more civilized folks.

In this simple but not unlaborious round of duties,—from his house in Belmont Street to the school, from the school to the college, from the college or school back to his house in Belmont Street, where he would generally spend the evenings alone in his library,—was Melvin's life passed. And yet it is in this man, thus plainly circumstanced in his native place, whose name can hardly have reached England, though some fame of him since his death has spread over Scotland, that I would seek to interest the reader. My best reason is that he is still of unique interest to me. I have known many other men since I knew him,—men of far greater celebrity in the world, and of intellectual claims of far more rousing character than belong to Latin scholarship; but I have known no one, and I expect to know no one, so perfect in his type as Melvin. Every man whose memory is tolerably faithful can reckon up those to whom he is himself indebted; and, trying to estimate at this moment the relative proportions of influences from this man

and from that man encountered by me which I can still feel running in my veins, it so happens that I can trace none more distinct, however it may have been marred and mudded, than that stream which, as Melvin gave it, was truly "honey-wine". It is long, at all events, since I vowed that some time or other I would say something publicly about Melvin. For I know no other notion of historical, or of any literature, worth a farthing, than that which rules that the matter of which it consists shall always be matter interesting to the writer, and *previously unknown* to the reader.

Melvin, it is now the deliberate conviction of many besides myself, was at the head of the Scottish Latinity of his day. How he had attained to his consummate mastery of the Latin tongue and literature, how indeed, amid the rough and hasty conditions of Scottish intellectual life, there could be bred a Latin scholar of his supreme type at all, is somewhat a mystery. England, with her longer classical school drilling, with her system of university residence, and her apparatus of college fellowships to bring scholarship to its rarest flower, may well be expected to develop and maintain a style of profound and exact scholarship which Scotland cannot rival, save in a few exceptional instances. And this is specially the case with Greek scholarship. But there are exceptional instances. There are instances of Scotsmen—and not Scotsmen only who have been at the English Universities,—who, by

private labour aiding a natural bent of genius, have, in Latinity at least, carried themselves up to even the English standard of exquisiteness; albeit something of a national type may still be discovered in the cast of their Latinity;—it may be recognized as the Latinity of the countrymen of Buchanan, Johnston, and Ruddiman. In later times, the bent of natural genius that could in any case lead to such a result must have been very decided, and the labour great and secret. In the case of Melvin, I can suppose nothing else than that the traditional muse of Aberdonian Latinity, still hovering about the region and loth to quit it, became incarnate in him at his birth, by way of securing a new lease of residence. The incidents of his life, at all events, so far as I know them, are no sufficient explanation.

Born in Aberdeen, of poor parents, in 1794, he had passed through the Grammar School a few years after Byron had left it, his teachers there having been a Mr Nicoll and the then rector, Mr Cromar. He had gone thence to Marischal College as the first bursar of his year; and, after leaving College, he had been usher at a private academy at Udny, near Aberdeen, and then under-master in Old Aberdeen Grammar School, where the chief master was a Mr M'Lauchlan, of some note as a Celtic and classical scholar. In 1822 he had been invited by his old master, Nicoll, then in declining health, to be his assistant in the Aberdeen Grammar School; and, on Nicoll's death, he had been appointed to

succeed him, after a public competition in which he distanced the other candidates, and won extraordinary applause from the judges. The Rector, Cromar, died in 1826, and Melvin, though the youngest under-master, had again in public competition won the unanimous appointment. On the 24th of April of that year,—in one of those assemblies of the city magistrates, city clergy, college professors, and other dignitaries, the red-coated town's officers not forgotten, which took place in the main school-room, to the great delight of the boys, on certain gala days, and always at the annual visitation and distribution of prizes,—Melvin was installed, at the age of thirty-two, into the post which was to be his till death. The office may have been worth £250 a year. His appointment to the Latin Lectureship in Marischal College, which may have been worth £80 a year more, came soon afterwards.

Whatever start he may have had in the lessons of Nicoll and Cromar, and whatever firmer grasp of rudimentary Latin he may have got in teaching it at Udny and under M'Lauchlan in Old Aberdeen, Melvin's scholarship must have been the result of an amount of reading for himself utterly unusual in his neighbourhood. The proof of this exists in the superb library, one of the wonders of Aberdeen, which, even with his moderate means, he had managed to collect around him. There was nowhere in that part of Scotland, probably nowhere

in all Scotland, such another private library of the classic writers and of all commentaries, lexicons, scholiasts and what not, appertaining to them. To see him in his large room in Belmont Street, every foot of the wall space of which, from the floor to the ceiling, and even over the door and between the windows, was occupied with books filling the exactly-fitted bookshelves, was at once a delight and a revelation. And the collection of this library must have been begun quite early in his life. His sister, who was much younger than he was and outlived him, used to say that her first recollections were "not so much recollections of him as of books and him." He had catalogues of books sent to him from all quarters, and he was always purchasing. He possessed complete sets of the fine old editions of the Latin classics, Dutch and English, with some of the later German; and his collection of Mediæval Latin literature was probably the completest in Scotland. The most obscure and out-of-the-way names were all represented. In Greek literature, his collection was nothing like so full; there were even extraordinary gaps in it. Among the Latins, he abounded most in editions of Horace, having, he once told a friend,[1] a copy of Horace for every day in the year. And so, among these Latin classics, and the commentators and grammarians of all ages illustrating them, he had read and read, till, at the

[1] Sir William Geddes, Melvin's successor in the Rectorship of the Grammar School, and afterwards Principal of Aberdeen University.

time of his appointment to the Grammar School rectorship, his knowledge of Latinity was probably almost more extensive, original, deep, subtle, and delicate than that of any other scholar within the limits of North Britain.

But Melvin's Latin scholarship, and especially what one critic has called his *curiosa diligentia* in minute matters, speaks for itself in the Latin grammar which he compiled for the school soon after his appointment to it, and which was used in the school incessantly, from the lowest classes upwards, as supplementary to the Rudiments. If anybody cares to read it now, I would recommend the specially Melvinian morsels in the little critical footnotes.

During our three years in the under classes we saw Melvin only incidentally, and on the weekly gatherings of the whole school in the public school-room; when the fact that he wore a gown and kept his hat on, while the other three masters were without gowns and had their hats off, greatly impressed the young ones. His authority over the other masters was never made in the least apparent, but it was felt to exist; and there was always an awful sense of what might be the consequences of an appeal to him in a case of discipline. No such appeal, in my day, from Watt or Forbes (Mr Dun required to make none) ever ended in anything more serious than a public verbal rebuke; but that was terrible enough. For the aspect of the man,—

then in the prime of manhood, lean, but rather tall and well-shouldered, and with a face of the pale dark kind, naturally austere, and made more stern by the marks of the smallpox,—was unusually awe-compelling. The name "Grim," or, more fully, "Grim Pluto," had been bestowed upon him, after a phrase in one of the lessons, by one of his early classes; and this name was known to all the school. When he entered the school gate, the whisper in the public school would be "Here's Grim"; and, as he walked through the school into his own class-room, looking neither right nor left, with his gold watch-chain and seals dangling audibly as he went, all would be hushed. And yet, with all this fear of him, there was affection, and a longing to be in his classes, to partake of that richer and finer instruction of which we heard such reports.

When a boy did pass into the rector's immediate charge, he came to know Melvin better. The great awe of him still remained. Stricter or more perfect order than that which Melvin kept in the two classes which he taught simultaneously it is impossible to conceive. But it was all done by sheer moral impressiveness, and a power of rebuke, either by mere glance, or by glance and word together, in which he was masterly. As a born ruler of boys, Arnold himself cannot have surpassed Melvin. There were wanting, of course, in Melvin's case, many of those incidents that must have contributed to the complete veneration with which the Rugby boys looked at

Arnold—the known reputation of the man, for example, in the wide world of thought and letters beyond the walls of the schoolroom,—yet, so far as personal influence within the school was concerned, there was in Melvin some form of almost all those qualities that we read of in Arnold, which tended to blend love more and more, on closer intimacy, with the first feeling of reverence. Integrity and truthfulness, conjoined with a wonderful considerateness, were characteristic of all he said and did. His influence was so high-toned and strict that, even had he taught nothing expressly, it would have been a moral benefit for a boy to have been within it. It did one good even to look at him day after day as the man presided over us. As he sat in his own class-room, I came to admire, more and more, despite his grim and somewhat scarred face, the beauty of his finely formed head, the short black hair of which, crisping close round it, defined its shape exactly, and made it more like an ideal Roman head than would have been found on any other shoulders in a whole Campus Martius of Aberdonians. One un-Roman habit he had—that of snuff-taking. But though he took snuff in extraordinary quantities, it was, if I may so say, as a Roman gentleman would have taken it, with all the dignity of the toga, and every pinch emphatic.

In that teaching of Latin which Melvin perseveringly kept to as his particular business, a large portion of the work of his classes consisted, of course, of readings in the Latin authors, in continuation of

what had been read in the junior classes. Here, unless perchance he began with a survey of the grammar, to see how we were grounded and to rivet us afresh to the rock, we first came to perceive his essential peculiarities. Accuracy to the last and minutest word read, and to the nicest shade of distinction between two apparent synonyms, was what he studied and insisted on; and this always with a view to the cultivation of a taste for pure and classic, as distinct from Brummagem Latinity. The authors chosen were few and select, chiefly Cæsar and Livy among the prose-writers, and Virgil, Horace, and Buchanan's Psalms among the poets. The quantity read was not large—seldom more than a page a day. But every sentence was gone over at least five times: first, read aloud by the boy that might be called on; then translated word for word, with the utmost literality, each Latin word being named as the English equivalent was fitted to it; then rendered as a whole somewhat more freely and elegantly, but still with no permission of that slovenly and soul-ruining practice of translation which is called "giving the spirit of the original"; then analysed etymologically, each important verb or noun becoming the text for an exercise up and down, backwards and forwards, in all appertaining to it; and lastly construed or analysed in respect of its syntax and idiom, the reasons of its moods, cases, and what not. In reading poetry, there was of course the further pro-

cess of the scanning, in which above all Melvin was exacting. To the common reproach against Scottish scholarship, that Scotsmen have no grounding in quantities, and say *vectĭgal* and *vectīgal*, just as providence may direct them at the moment, the Aberdeen Grammar School, at least, was not liable. A false quantity was even more shameful in Melvin's code than a false construction; and it was not his fault if we did not turn out good Prosodians. Of course, in the readings, whether from the prose-writers or the poets, occasion was taken by Melvin to convey all sorts of minute pieces of elucidative historical and biographical information, in addition to what the boys were expected to procure for themselves in the act of preparation; and in this way a considerable amount of curious lore—little bits of knowledge, for example, about the Roman calendar, the Roman wines and the ways of drinking them — was gradually and accurately acquired. Never, also did Melvin leave a passage of peculiar beauty of thought, expression, or sound, without rousing us to a sense of its peculiarity, and impressing it upon us by reading the passage himself, eloquently and lovingly, so as to give effect to it. Over a line like Virgil's description of the Cyclopes working at the anvil—

"Illi inter sese magnâ vi brachia tollunt,"

he would linger with real ecstasy, repeating it again and again with something of a tremble of excitement in his grave voice. Perhaps, however, it was in

expounding his favourite Horace that he rose oftenest to what may be called the higher criticism. It was really beautiful to hear him dissect a passage in Horace, and then put it together again, thrillingly complete. Once or twice he would delight us by the unexpected familiarity of an illustration of a passage in Horace by a parallel passage from Burns. The unexpected familiarity, I have called it; for, though his private friends knew how passionately fond he was of Burns, how he had his poems by heart, and often on his lips, and was, moreover, learned in Scottish poetry and the old Scottish language generally, this was hardly known in the school; and it startled us to hear our Rector suddenly quoting Scotch. It gave him a pleasure, I believe, which he could not have resisted at the moment, though the glee of the class had become uproar, to link his darling Horace with his darling Burns, and to remind us that, if Horace, in his "O Fons Bandusiæ," had said—

> "Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium
> Me dicente cavis impositam ilicem
> Saxis, unde loquaces
> Lymphae desiliunt tuae,"

the Scottish bard, without consulting Horace, had had the same thought:—

> "The Illissus, Tiber, Thames, and Seine,
> Glide sweet in mony a tunefu' line;
> But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
> And cock your crest;
> We'll gar *our* streams and burnies shine
> Up wi' the best."

On the whole, however, Melvin's teaching of Latin was strictly philological. He did not lead us over a great deal of ground in our readings, and he kept carefully to the track of what we did read. He did not belabour us with vast masses of lax information about the Romans, nor branch out into speculative disquisitions on the philosophy of literature and things in general. His aim was, by the intense accuracy of our reading in a well-arranged course of progressive difficulty, both to drill us to accuracy in all intellectual matters whatever, and to put us in perfect possession of the instrument of Latin, should we care afterwards to use it for ourselves.

The amount of practice in Latin composition that went on in the Aberdeen Grammar School was known, I believe, in no other school in North Britain. Almost from the beginning, we were practised in making Latin sentences, and in constructing sentences to be turned into Latin, with which publicly to puzzle each other; and very soon, in addition to the printed exercise-books, we were given "versions," pieces of English expressly prepared by the master, to be dictated to us in the class-room, and then turned into Latin. But it was in Melvin's classes that the practice of version-making attained its highest development. He did not tax us much in the way of versification—this was reserved for his Marischal College classes—but our practice in prose-composition was incessant. Two entire days in every week were devoted to "the ver-

sions"; and those were the days of keenest emulation. In anticipation of them, we used to jot down in note-books of our own, divided alphabetically, and with index margins for the leading words, any specialities of phrase or idiom, any niceties about *Ut*, *Quum*, *Quod* and *Quia*, *Ille* and *Iste*, *Uter* and *Quis*, *Suus* and *Ejus*, *Plerique* and *Plurimi*, and the like, upon which Melvin dwelt in the course of our readings. These manuscript "phrase-books" or "idiom-books" contained, doubtless, much that might have been found in print; but they were precious, because they were compiled by ourselves. With them, and with Ainsworth's Dictionary for our authorized guide, we assembled on the morning of every version-day; and, sure enough, in the piece of English which Melvin then dictated to us—which was always a model of correct style and punctuation, and generally not uninteresting in matter—there were some of the traps laid for us against which he had been recently warning us. We sat and wrote the versions; those who were done first (generally the first-faction boys) going up to Melvin's desk to have them examined; after which they became his assistants in examining the other versions, so as to clear them all off within the day. In those versions into Latin, as in the translations from the Latin, closeness to the original was imperative: no fraudulent "giving of the spirit of the original", so as to elude the difficulty presented by the letter, was tolerated for a moment.

The system of marking was peculiar. You were classed, not by your positive merits of ingenuity, elegance, or such-like, but, as in the world itself, by your freedom from faults or illegalities. There were three grades of error: the *minimus*, or, as we called it, the *minie*, which counted as 1, and which included misspellings, wrong choice of words, etc.; the *medius*, or *medie*, which counted as 2, and included false tenses and other such slips; and the *maximus*, or *maxie*, which counted as 4, and included wrong genders, a glaring indicative for a subjunctive, etc. There might, in a single word, be even (horrible event!) a double *maxie*, or a combination of *maxie* and *medie*, or *maxie* and *minie*. On a *maxie* in the version of a good scholar, Melvin was always cuttingly severe. "*Ut . . . dixit*," he would say, underscoring the two words. "Ut . . . dixit," he would repeat, refreshing his frown with a pinch of snuff. "Ut . . . dixit," he would say a third time, with a look in the culprit's face as if he had murdered his father. "Oh, William, William, you have been very giddy of late!"—and William would descend crestfallen, and be miserable for half a day.

So thoroughly was this gradation of *maxie*, *medie*, and *minie* worked into us, that I believe it became identified permanently with our notions of the nature of things; and I question whether there is a Melvinian extant in the world now, that does not classify sins and social crimes as *minies*, *medies*, and *maxies*. On our versions, at all events, the sum

total of the errors, so graduated, was marked at the top; and we took our places accordingly. Only between two versions co-equal in respect of freedom from fault was any positive merit of elegance allowed to decide the superiority; and if, among two or three versions of the first-faction boys that were passed as *sine errore*, one was declared *sine errore, elegantissimo*, you may fancy whether the top boy that owned it did not feel like a peacock! But when Melvin dictated his own Latin next day, to be written in our version-books after the English, then the difference between *our* best and *his* ordinary would be at once apparent.

Melvin was most conscientious in preparing the "Versions" for his classes. Nothing vexed him more than when some rare press of engagements obliged him to dictate an old version a second time. Every year he prepared about a hundred versions; so that altogether he must have left in manuscript between two and three thousand. The fame of them had gone abroad through Scotland in his lifetime; and some of them, taken from stray version-books of his old pupils, were unscrupulously appropriated, and printed without acknowledgment in his later years.[1]

Some people have objected to Melvin's method of teaching as too narrow, too pertinaciously old-

[1] After Melvin's death, a volume of his versions, honestly compiled and acknowledged, was published by the Rev. Peter Calder, Rector of the Grantown Grammar School, with a Supplementary volume by way of key. (Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart. London: Simpkin & Marshall.)

fashioned, two little according to the newest lights. For myself, though I can conceive other methods of teaching Latin which should be also good, I am persuaded that not only was his method admirably perfect for its end, but also that no method which did not aim as resolutely at the same end, by a considerable use of the same means, would be worth much in the long run. At all events, Melvin's method was adopted by him deliberately, and though in accordance with his nature, not without some cost of self-repression. The Melvin that we came afterwards to know in his own house and library, for example, had many tastes and interests of an intellectual kind that one could hardly have surmised in the Melvin of the Grammar School. I have already mentioned his fondness for old Scottish poetry, and his expertness in the Scottish dialect; and I find that, as early as 1825, when he was still only under-master in the school, he had assisted Jamieson in the preparation of the two-volume supplement to his *Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, published in that year; and his services are specially acknowledged in the preface to that work.

But, as he kept to himself to the last, as one of his private recreations, this knowledge of Scottish philology, so, even of his Latin philology—it was but a sifting of the purest wheat that he gave to his pupils. Though, in teaching them, he drew Latin only from what he considered

the wells of Latin undefiled, his own erudition was vast in the Latin literature of all styles and epochs. He had in his library, as I have said, an extraordinary collection of the Mediæval Latinists; and though in the class-room we had come to regard Plautus, poor fellow, as little better than an abomination, on account of his perpetually misleading us in the matter of the deponent verbs, I have no doubt that when Melvin was by himself he enjoyed his Plautus as much as anyone. Then, his excursions among the grammarians and in the history of modern Latinity were unknown to us. We had the results, but of the masses of material we heard but little. Of his admiration for Buchanan we were quite aware, because Buchanan's Psalms were amongst the books read; and the beauty of his Latinity became a subject of comment; but of Arthur Johnston, the Aberdonian, whom also Melvin admired, we heard but incidentally; and I do not think we could have guessed in the class-room, what was nevertheless the fact, that the modern scholar of whom his admiration was most profound was the Englishman, Bentley. In all this there must have been self-repression, and a resolute recollection of the maxim that it is biscuit, rather than strong meat, that suits a beginner.

It is a matter of regret that so much of Melvin's scholarship died with him, uncommemorated by any work from his pen except his grammar, or by any sufficient tradition among his pupils. He was

reported to be engaged on a Latin dictionary, and it was certainly thought of by him, as a worthy labour of his life; but I do not know whether he even left any materials for it. The passion for acquisition, I fancy, had conquered in him the desire for production. A living scholar, who knew him, has regretted that Melvin did not give to the world an edition of some classic author, and so have preserved some of "those fruits of ripe scholarship and those exquisite morsels of keen and delicate criticism which he had gathered in his long experience"; and the same scholar suggests that Statius, "who is in want of such a service", might have suited the purpose.

More might have been brought out of Melvin had he been elected to the Latin Chair in the University. He had been Lecturer in Humanity in Marischal College for some ten years before the institution and endowment of the regular Humanity Professorship; and, as in that post he *had* given effect to some of the higher developments of Latinity, it was expected, in 1839, when the Chair was actually established, that his promotion to that post, relieving him from the drudgery of his School-Rectorship, would begin a new era in Melvin's life. But the Whigs, then in office, knew nothing of Melvin; and so there was appointed to the new post, instead of Melvin, one of his own old pupils, then an Edinburgh advocate, a man to whom the only objection even then was that he had obtained what had been popularly destined for Melvin, and who in

the varied course of his long subsequent life acquired a celebrity far wider than Melvin's, though of a totally different character, by the versatility and eccentricities of his genius.

Thus Melvin's connexion with Marischal College was at an end; and for another spell of years he went between his house in Belmont Street and the Grammar School, faithfully performing the duties of his Rectorship. Once again the Professorship became vacant, by the transference of its first holder to the University of Edinburgh. This time Melvin's friends made sure that he would be appointed. Many of his pupils were now grown-up men of local influence, and every exertion was made in his behalf. But again he was set aside. I think it was the Conservatives—Melvin's own party, so far as he belonged to one—who were then in power. He said little, and went on as before; but it was a cruel blow, and they say he never recovered from it. Testimonials from old pupils, and other demonstrations, attested the sympathy felt for him, and the desire to compensate, so far as possible, for his disappointment. The last testimonial, a sum of £300, in a silver snuff-box, was presented to him in his own house on the 18th of June 1853, by a deputation, headed by the Lord Provost of Aberdeen. He thanked them feelingly, but was then in too feeble health to say much. He had persevered in teaching his classes as usual, but was hardly able to move to and from the school. His friends were

looking forward to the approaching holiday-month of July, when he might, as in previous years, go to the country to recruit. The boys, respecting his weakness, were less noisy than usual as the holiday-time drew near; and, if they were preparing for the usual decoration of the "factions" and the school walls with green branches of trees and crowns and festoons of flowers, they made their preparations in quiet. Melvin spoke of this careful kindness of the boys with much pleasure and gratitude. On Monday, the 28th of June, he was in his place in the school; but on that day he fainted from exhaustion, and had to be carried home. The next day, Tuesday the 29th, he died in his house in Belmont Street, aged fifty-nine years.

There is a poem of Browning's which I think of often, because it reminds me of Melvin. It is the *Grammarian's Funeral*;—the song supposed to be sung by the disciples of a great scholar, shortly after the revival of learning in Europe, as they are carrying the dead body of their master up from the plain to the high mountain pinnacle where they mean to bury him. First, they tell why they select this lofty eminence for his burying-place; why his honoured body should not repose in the valley; then, marching slowly on to the mountain-side, they chaunt:—

> "Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
> 'Ware the beholders!
> This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
> Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should Spring take note
Winter would follow?"

And so, toiling on and up, carrying their burden, they wend at last to the peak which is their destination, still chaunting their master's praises, and telling how to the last, in illness and paralysis, he had never ceased learning and labouring—

"So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based *Oun*,
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye high fliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak! the multitude below
Live, for they can, there.
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying."

CHAPTER XI

OLD MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND ITS PROFESSORS

"By St Andrew," says Dugald Dalgetty in the *Legend of Montrose*, "here's a common fellow, a stipendiary with four pounds a year and a livery-cloak, thinks himself too good to serve Ritt-master Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, who has studied Humanity at the Marischal College of Aberdeen and served half the princes of Europe!"

And the valiant Ritt-master keeps on reminding those about him of the fact that he has studied at Marischal College, as one of his chief distinctions. Even in that tremendous moment when, in the dungeon at Inveraray, he astutely recognizes the spy who has secretly entered to talk with him as no other than the great Argyle himself, and springing on his wily lordship, brings him to the ground, pins him there by main strength, and throttles him into capitulation;—even in that tremendous moment the thought of his dear Alma Mater in the north country flashes through his stalwart mind; and it is with a quotation of Marischal College Latin that he negotiates with the prostrate Marquis.

Blessings on thy memory, if only for Alma Mater's sake, thou shrewd and doughty Sir Dugald; and may thy last days have been peaceful, with the widow Strachan for thy spouse, in thy regained paternal estate of Drumthwacket! Great as is my veneration, on historical grounds, for the Presbyterian Marquis, whom men called Gillespie Grumach on account of the cast in his eye, I confess I can never read how thou didst pin him in his own dungeon without forgetting altogether that it was the cause of Presbyterianism that was imperilled, and feeling my heart leap with glee that my fellow-collegian was uppermost.

As Marischal College was founded in 1593, and as Dalgetty left it at the age of eighteen, to carry the learning whilk he had acquired there, and his gentle bluid and designation, together with his pair of stalwart arms and legs conform, into the German wars, it is a matter of easy calculation that this most celebrated of all the sons of Marischal College must have left its cloisters about 1620, and must have belonged to the latter end of its first generation of students. It is not creditable to the antiquarianism of the place that there has never been a search in the College-books for his matriculation-entry. But I would fain here rouse the academic antiquarianism of the place to a larger labour than this. Why have we not a history of Marischal College and University, or at least an *Athenæ et Fasti* of that venerable institution? Though the Ritt-master Dalgetty may

be her most celebrated alumnus, yet, even before Sir Dugald sat at her bursar's table and there learnt that art of rapid mastication which he found so useful to him in after life, she had sent forth one or two sons of some note; and, if to these were added the much longer list of her eminent alumni from Sir Dugald's days down to the present time,—ending, let us say, with that Sir James Outram, the Bayard of India,—then the roll of the notabilities of Marischal College might seem not an insignificant one. At all events, it is the bounden duty of any Anthony Wood that may be living now in Aberdeen to do his best to draw up such a roll, imbedding it in such a text of the general history of the college as he can prepare. Or, if there is no one Anthony Wood to do the work, then let some local antiquarian society put their heads together, and at least give us a volume of Marischal College dates, documents and lists of names, such as the King's College people have already executed for their institution. For alas! the history may now be rounded off and complete. Marischal College or University exists no longer in its separate identity. It and King's College were fused together, in 1860, into the present single University of Aberdeen. There is still a fine granite building called Marischal College, in which a portion of the work of the united University is carried on; but the real antique establishment, — Dugald Dalgetty's Marischal College, and mine,—is no

longer *in rerum natura.* All is apt, therefore, for the writing of its history.[1]

Ah! the massive old pile in the great space of ground entered by the old gateway from the Broadgate, how well I can see it yet! Not the fine modern building which visitors to Aberdeen now look at, and which was finished about 1842 at a cost of some £21,000; but its predecessor on the same site: a great, square, hulking, yet lofty, ancient lump of a building, impressive by its amorphous grey massiveness even in the daylight, but in winter nights quite weird to look at in the dark space that enshrined it, with the few lights twinkling in some of its small windows, and the stars seeming to roll, soliciting astrological watch, over the battlements of its high observatory! There it had stood, the main part of it, the same through all the years since Dugald Dalgetty had seen it: mayhap, on the battlements of its left tower, astrologers, in the shape of mantled old professors, had watched; and, groping up the turret stairs in the dark, one might encounter their professorial ghosts.

And then the class-rooms as we sat in them by

[1] The wish expressed in this paragraph (written in 1864) for an adequate history, or collection of materials for the history, of Marischal College and University, has been nobly fulfilled by the publication, since then, under the auspices of the New Spalding Club, of two massive volumes, "Records of Marischal College and University," edited by Mr P. G. Anderson, Librarian of the University of Aberdeen. Mr Anderson has achieved a work comparable to that of Anthony Wood for Oxford. D. M.

day were all old and quaint, though some older and quainter than others; and the great common hall stretched the whole width of the main building in the first storey; and on its old chimney-piece in the middle were carved the arms of the Earls Marischal, with their noble motto of scorn for public opinion: "Aiunt: Quid aiunt? Aiant!"—"They say: What say they? Let them say!" Its wainscoted walls were hung with many old portraits of historical interest by George Jamesone and others; and among these was a portrait of Descartes, which I could never cease gazing at, it was such a queer, puckered old face. The hair came down over the forehead, and the eyebrows were arched up to meet the hair, so that, between the two, the forehead, which was broad enough, had not an inch of visible height. But he looked a terribly determined intellectual little devil for all that; and though I knew little about him, and rather wondered at first how any mortal, wherever he was born, could have had a name that seemed so like the plural of a wheeled vehicle, he and I took a fancy to each other. There were other portraits, some of them old Aberdonians, or other Scotsmen, that interested me; but none, as far as I recollect, so much as this.

And so, for four years, often in this public hall, but oftener still in the class-rooms where we were taught all that Marischal College had to teach, we wore the red gowns and the red velvet collars which were the compulsory costume of the students of

Arts, till one early spring day we were ranged ceremoniously in the public hall, some eighteen or twenty of us who had completed the curriculum, out of a class originally seventy strong, and there, clad all uncouthly in black silk gowns, which the college beadles had begged, borrowed, or stolen for the occasion from the city clergy, were made to repeat the words of a Latin oath, and having been dabbed on the head individually by the Principal with a sacred bit of black velvet, were created and admitted Masters of Arts. When I think what *Magister Artium* implies according to the English standard, and then recollect what a flock of fledglings we were (the youngest of us exactly sixteen years and four months old) [1] that flew off into the world from that northern nursery of learning, feathered legally with the fine designation, the thing does seem rather absurd. Matters, however, have been considerably mended of late in the Scottish system in this respect; and it is right to say that, even in those days, in some of the Scottish Universities,—at all events in that of Edinburgh,—the degree of A.M. was a much rarer honour, won only by a very few every year after a very special examination.

The regular college session was in winter only, or from the beginning of November to the end of March. It was during those five winter months that the red gowns of the "Colliginers," as they were called by the townspeople, made the streets

[1] David Masson was himself the "youngest of us".—F. M.

of Aberdeen picturesque. The bright new gowns of the freshmen or first year's students, marked them out for persecution by their seniors; and it was considered desirable to get the velvet collars inkstained and the sleeves and body toned down in colour as soon as possible. The fourth year's students, or "Magistrands," were easily recognized by the superior tatteredness and discoloration of their scarlet garb. It was only the Arts students, who may have numbered about two hundred and fifty in all, that wore this flaring costume; the less numerous students of the other three faculties—to wit, Law, Medicine, and Theology—wore no peculiar dress. In general the four faculties had little inter-connexion, the students of each attending their own set of professors in their own part of the college; but there was always one period of the college session when all were brought together pell-mell. This was the period at which the students of all the faculties exercised in common the grand privilege, which belonged to them by charter, of electing their Lord Rector for the year.

Oh! those Rectorial Elections in that far-away and long-ago Marischal College! Talk of the Saturnalia of a contested election! The humours of the wildest and noisiest election of a member of Parliament for an English borough could not be richer than those which I recollect as attending our annual election (for the elections were then annual), of a Lord Rector for old Marischal College. It was an affair of some three weeks. First, there

were the meetings of the separate classes in which all sorts of persons, likely and unlikely, were proposed; then there were the aggregate meetings in which the three or four candidates that had by this time been pitched upon by general agreement were upheld and discussed; and, lastly, there was the grand meeting in the hall on election day, most of the professors being present, when the two, or, perhaps, the three candidates that it had been resolved finally to pit against each other were formally nominated and seconded amid cheers and yells from the multitude; after which the whole body of the electors retired to vote individually in the four "nations" into which they were distributed. Each "nation" included all who were natives of a particular region of Scotland traditionally marked out—one of the "nations," however, including all stray comers from non-Scottish parts of the earth; and it was ultimately decided, not by the absolute majority of individual votes, but by the majority of the collective votes of the "nations", who was the successful candidate. When the votes of the "nations" stood as two to two, so as to require a casting vote from the outgoing rector (which might easily happen), or when the candidate elected by the majority of the "nations" had not the majority of the individual votes (which might also happen), there would be a perfect frenzy of mutual protests and upbraidings; and the very professors, if they interfered, would be bearded and defied.

And oh, the oratory, the oratory, at those meet-

ings! The speakers at the aggregate meetings were, as a matter of course, the older students,—generally students of divinity,—we, the red-gowned youngsters, contenting ourselves with our humbler duty of roaring and counter-roaring, hissing and counter-hissing, and laughing till our sides ached. We were a remorseless audience; and we knew good speeches from bad. Some really good speeches were made, and we were always fair enough to give *them* a hearing on whatever side they chanced to be; but no mercy was shown to any poor wretch that gave us a chance, by any oddity of manner or physiognomy or any blunder of utterance, of shrieking him down.

"I care not for the hiss of the serpent, nor for the sardonic laugh of the hyena," said one speaker, when our demonstrations were going against him—a poor timid creature, as we all knew, whom a moderately fierce duck would, at any other time, have driven to flight; and there and then the serpents and the hyenas extinguished *him.*

"Is Dr Abercromby going to make a *moniply* of it?" asked one Highland orator, on an occasion when it was proposed that the existing Lord Rector, Dr Abercromby, the distinguished physician of Edinburgh, should be re-elected; and when, irritated by the burst of laughter which followed his mispronunciation of the word "monopoly", he told us further, in Highland accents, that we "might as well attempt to stem the Atlantic with a *straa*" as to put

him down,—you should have seen how the straw *did* stem the Atlantic!

"This proposition has been nipped in the bud—I may say strangled in the womb!" said a dapper medical Irishman, who had somehow impressed his party as a master of rhetoric, fit to be put forward as their spokesman on the great election day;—and I never saw anything neater than the way in which his fellow-students proceeded to strangle the further utterances of that young man.

All in all, I would not for the world that these occasions of rollick, and of college liberty broken loose, should be done away with. Except that there was far more of the nonsense of Whig and Tory antagonism in the Rectorial contests than befitted their nature, the elections, I fancy, were honest and judicious enough. Besides, it is well that among the customs of University life there should be some that, if they have no other purpose, shall at least be the means of accumulating, in extra abundance at particular points, reminiscences of fun for future years.

We had among our professors two old men, who ought either never to have been there, or ought to have been superannuated long before I and my co-evals became acquainted with them. Strike out the Civil History from the business of the Regent's class of the second year, so as to leave only the Natural History; and, as we met compulsorily in the class three hours a day for five months, there

was certainly a possibility that we should then and there have been given such elementary instruction in Mineralogy, Hydrology, Geology, Meteorology, Botany, and Zoology, as would have been useful to all of us in our subsequent lives, and might have determined beneficially the whole future direction of the lives of some. That is the use of compulsory attendance on a course of professional lectures. It is the physical detention, at an impressible period of life, in a room where certain orders of ideas are kept sounding and circulating in the air. Alas! the Natural History that we got was such a five months' drivel about miscellaneous matters uninteresting to the soul of man, that how we listened to it at all is a marvel. Mineralogy, Botany, or Zoology, we had none; and as for the rest, the only bit of the course over which, in my memory, there rests yet a gleam of light, was a long account, introduced somewhere, of the draining of Blair Drummond Moss. When I think of the course now, I see a great bog in which some men are digging ditches, and others carting away the wet peat; I knew that this bog was somewhere in the middle of the course; but all round it I recall nothing but mist. Our Professor of Natural History!—Let me not be too hard on him. He had been a favourite pupil of the great Black, so there must have been reason to think at the time of his appointment that he would do well; and to the last, I am told, he used to amuse himself very expertly with geometrical problems.

But by the time he descended to us, bringing the Blair Drummond Moss with him, he was old and feeble, and incapable of doing justice even to that fascinating feat of drainage.

When I look back upon it all, I can remember how ill-used he often was. The poor old man!—I have even seen his tall, thin body rolling in the snow in the college-yard, by the accident of a slip, when he turned to arrest some rascal who had thrown a snowball at him; and, though we did pick him up with reverence and pity then, I am afraid we sometimes showed him little mercy in the class-room. While he was lecturing, snatches of song would sometimes come from an inscrutable part of the room, captivating additional voices, till the whole class was in chorus.

The Professor of Moral Philosophy was a man who had been of some power in his earlier days, and who retained a kind of sternness of look, which helped to keep order in his class; but his diluted dictations from Reid and Beattie were poor nutriment for our young powers of speculation. Although he could frown from his desk, it was from habit, and from a general notion that something wrong must be going on, and not from any knowledge where or what the wrong was. The chief form of wrong, so far as I can recollect, was that four or five of the students, who had constituted themselves into what they called a *Pro Bono Publico* Club, used frequently to disappear during the lecture into the

dark hollow space underneath the rising tiers of benches, and there hold their secret club meetings with bottled porter and mutton pies, bobbing up now and then to see that all was right, and the Moral Philosophy going on as usual. One painful incident in this class I shall never forget. The aged man was lecturing, and he had come to the phrase in his manuscript, "Study sedulously," without any change in his ordinary manner. "Study sed . . ." he repeated in his usual hard voice, but he got no farther than the syllable, "sed . . . sed . . ." and then, articulating no more, looked vacantly round: it was as if a black curtain had fallen between his consciousness and the outer world. He was carried home, and though he was able to return and resume duty next day, we were always in expectation of a recurrence of the ghastly incident.

There is real pain in setting down such things as these, but I hold it to be a duty. When I think what youth is, how eager, how docile by right matter and right measures, then, just because youth itself is so little critical and so easily pleased, it seems to me that society is bound to be doubly critical and exacting in its behalf. That, by the great age or the incapacity of the holder of an academic post, a generation of young men should go forth into the world deprived of all that they might have learnt, and would gladly have learnt, in any particular subject, had the reality corresponded with the appearance, is a very serious matter. The

most practical form of remedy, next to increased care and conscientiousness in elections to academic posts, is that device of superannuation on regulated retiring allowances which has been introduced, since the time I am now speaking of, into the system of all Scottish Universities.

But in my recollections of the teaching staff in the Arts Curriculum of old Marischal College from 1835 to 1839, I have put the worst first. The two aged incapables deducted, the rest of the staff were very excellent men. Of the noble Melvin's handling of the University Lectureship in Latin, which he held in conjunction with his Rectorship of the Grammar School, it is enough to say that it was thoroughly Melvinian in its fashion, and a great advance on his Grammar School teaching.

The Professor of Greek was Dr Robert James Brown, who had held the Chair since 1827. Of somewhat thick-tongued utterance, that spluttered more particularly over the letter *r*, — an effect, possibly, of Dutch surroundings in his infancy,— he won upon his students by a rich affectionateness of disposition and manner, the outcome of genuine warmth of heart. He knew his students individually, and addressed them by their Christian names; and he kept a register, it was said, of all his former students, and could tell what had become of any one of them. What with his affectionate manner, what with brief gusts of anger on occasion, he kept sufficiently good order, though not over strict.

Whatever may have been his own attainments in Greek, and however acquired, he was an enthusiast in his subject, and ready to teach it without stint. But we were not thoroughly grounded in the language; were not put in effective possession of Greek as an instrument, and so could not pretend to anything like Greek scholarship after the English University standard.

I saw but too little of Dr Brown after I ceased to be his pupil. He retired from his professorship in 1860, on the union of Marischal College with King's College, and after twelve more years of honourable and honoured life, he died in 1872.

A man of a very different type was Dr John Cruickshank, our Professor of Mathematics. He was of about the same age as Dr Brown, but was senior to him in the University, having held the Mathematical Chair since 1817. He was a man of tall and very erect figure, with a countenance of the severe and thoughtful Scottish cast so frequently found in that northern district of Aberdeenshire of which he was a native, and with light hair and complexion, and a very high forehead. He moved about the college with a gait of quiet authority that impressed the students with a feeling of respect, and even fear, not accorded by them to any of his colleagues. The popular name for him that had come down among us was "Homo," the origin of which I do not know. Rectitude, unswerving rectitude, that was his supreme moral

characteristic, and one had to find out gradually by closer intercourse with him what a fund of shrewd and sagacious humour and of practical benevolence was under this stately cover. His intellectual qualities corresponded with his moral qualities. Deliberate lucidity and methodical exactness of mind appeared in all he did. They appeared even in his handwriting, the extreme legibility of which was due to the equally full and exact formation of each individual letter, and they appeared in his mathematical teaching.

There could have been no better teaching of mathematics, the possibilities of the time and the place considered, than Dr Cruickshank's in Marischal College. That perfect order was maintained in his class need not be said. It was wonderful to see how the unruliness that prevailed in the Natural History Class-room subsided into respectful quiet and docility when the same body of students were seated in the Mathematical Class-room. Dr Cruickshank succeeded in turning out not a few notable individual mathematicians of the old Aberdonian sort. That sort, it is true, has been superseded of late years by a change in the mathematical atmosphere over the Dee and the Don. A mathematical examination paper now in any Scottish University is so different from the mathematical examination papers of former days as to be bewilderingly abstruse at first sight to a survivor of those old days. There is far less of pure geometry than there used to be,

and immensely more of the bustle of Analytics. Thus in all the Scottish Universities; but in Aberdeen, and more particularly since 1860, when University honours in mathematics were first made attainable, the former local standard of the possible mathematical maximum has been antiquated by the operation of that special influence from Cambridge which has set up the Cambridge Senior Wranglership as the acme to be aimed at. Dr Cruickshank lived to see this change, and perhaps to admire it, for it was not till November 1875 that his venerated figure disappeared from among the Aberdonians.

It was in our third year that we came into the charge of Dr Knight, who was our Professor of Natural Philosophy. Within the first day or two, I remember well, we felt ourselves in a new kind of professorial presence. The class was an unusually full one, as it was always attended by some "private students" of riper years, from the town, in addition to the regular red-gowned students who had to go through the college classes in a certain fixed order. He lectured to this class either from his desk, where he would read continuously from the manuscript through a gold-mounted double eyeglass held lightly between his forefinger and thumb, and often removed so that he could survey the class freely and yet not lose the thread of his reading, or else from the floor, to which he would frequently descend so as to be near the apparatus table, and where he would generally speak extempore without book or

eyeglass. We saw, lecturing to us thus, a man in the prime of life, of middle height, of fairish or pale complexion, with a fringe of scant, fair hair about the temples and round by the ears, but bald a-top, so that his head looked of the laterally compressed type, long from back to front, rather than round, broad, or high. On the whole, it was a handsome face, but with a curious air of lurking irony about the corners of the mouth.

His greatest personal peculiarity,—a peculiarity known to us before from his appearances in the public hall, but now noted more particularly,—was his voice. His voice was remarkably feeble and of high pitch, though, as we came to know afterwards, he was an unusually muscular man, so that, in an experiment testing the degree of force necessary to pull asunder two metal hemispheres, he could easily, planting firmly his somewhat outbowed legs, pull towards him or across the room, with his left hand only, the strongest student selected to pull against him. One of his favourite phrases was "so to speak"; it occurred in every second or third sentence, when he talked extempore; and the students, in allusion to this vocal peculiarity of his, used to translate it into "so to squeak." But this was doing him injustice, for his voice, though feeble, had a quiet determination in it that was audible through the class by another quality than shrillness. It was such a voice as Charlemagne is said to have had—if the reader

is ingenious enough to infer anything about my Natural Philosophy professor from that far-off analogy. He was a Charlemagne among *us*, I can tell you; and, for all his feeble voice, governed us tightly, and now and then tongued us with a sarcastic scurrility which no other professor ventured on, and which might be far from pleasant.

The matter of his lectures was good, and, for students at our stage, rich in a new sort of interest. They had been very carefully prepared, aud were written out in a neat small hand in octavo note-books, made of the fine thick old Whatman paper which we seldom see nowadays, blank spaces being left for additions as they might be suggested. Altogether, I suppose I should now find the matter of those lectures to have been rather popular, and of a kind now superseded; but the presentation of it was singularly lucid, and it was all then very stimulating and new. We had glimpses of new wonders of knowledge, and of a kind of activity of mind different from that exhibited either in classical erudition or in mathematical problems, and dealing with Nature herself on a larger scale. We first came to have a notion what *thinking* or *speculating* might be. And then, passing from such preliminary matter, Knight led us in a leisurely and orderly manner through the successive divisions of his course.

Knight's deficiency, by the Cambridge standard of a Natural Philosophy professor, was the shallow-

ness of *his* mathematics. His course was one rather of rich and descriptive information than of mathematical investigation and demonstration. He introduced formulæ and calculations now and then, but his lectures were rather like an exceedingly interesting and well-arranged scientific encyclopædia for moderately mathematical readers. As he was, however, a neat experimenter, and had at his command an excellent collection of apparatus, he taught us a great deal more than it would have been easy to acquire by any possible course of private reading; while, for those who chose to avail themselves of it, there was a special library of standard books in Natural Philosophy attached to the class. And, what was best of all, he made us give in every week a written essay on some subject recently discussed in the class, compelling us to punctuality by a fine in case of default. The essays were all returned to us at the end of the session, whether read by him or not (for there were some fifty or sixty every week) may be left to conjecture. He had read samples of them at least, for he had a pretty shrewd idea who could write best.

In Knight's lectures, besides the occasional stimulus of an example of beautiful generalization taken from the history of science, there was also a certain pungent and insinuating influence of the nature of which we were too little aware to be able to give a name to it, though the effects, I now can see, were wholesome. I believe that Knight

lived and walked in Aberdeen in a perpetual relation of secret irony to everything around him, and especially to popular and clerical opinion. It was whispered among us, as a matter of tradition, that Knight was a sceptic, and that he had written books the copies of which he had carefully bought up, so as to suppress them. In those days, and in that latitude, the merest colourable suspicion of heterodoxy went a great way in the popular gossip about a man; and the notion *had* come down among us young fellows that Knight had queer opinions, and that, as he walked in the streets, he laughed in his sleeve at a good deal of the pomposity around him. Most of us liked him the better, I believe, on this account. He had, indeed, now learnt to keep very much to himself any speculations he may have formerly entertained of a kind discordant with the Aberdonian medium in which he moved; and in his intercourse with us there were cases in which, so far from encouraging any juvenile affectation of eagerness after the forbidden fruit of which he was supposed to have eaten so largely himself, he seemed to take a malicious pleasure in snubbing it. Once, when he was acting as the College-librarian, and a very young student asked for Hume's Essays,—"Haven't got it, master," said Knight coolly, with the faintest twitch of sarcasm on one side of his mouth:—"We don't keep such books in this College, my lad." The book, as no one knew better than

Knight, being at that moment within a few feet of him.

In all matters of public politics or college procedure, Knight was a stickler for authority and existing regulation. A Tory by profession, he had more than the usual Tory amount of the *odi profanum vulgus* feeling; the contempt for democracy and mob-opinion. And yet, with all this secretiveness of manner and conservatism of mood, the lurking Mephistopheles in Knight would break out. It would break out in his class-room, not only in the satirical tone of his references to some popular living celebrities, but in the very free rhetoric of vituperation which he permitted himself, when the behaviour of some student did not please him:—"There are blackguards in every class, my lad, and you're one of the blackguards in this!"

But perhaps it was out of his class-room, when he met two or three of his students at supper, or when he encountered one of them by himself in a suburb of the town—and on such an occasion he would walk half a mile or so with the student, and chat with him more familiarly than most of the other professors were known to do—it was then that those little Mephistophelic felicities of Knight, which we remembered and quoted to one another, were most apt to occur. An Aberdonian by birth, and a co-mate with Lord Byron in the Aberdeen Grammar School, he had a very vivid recollection of the boyhood of the future poet; and this is how

he once brought it in, in my hearing, when Byron was mentioned :—

"He had a most d——ble disposition, Byron ;—a most d——ble disposition. I remember his cutting the buttons off my coat as he sat behind me in the Grammar School; and I gave him a good hiding for it: He had a most d——ble disposition. He said he hated a dumpy woman. He shouldn't have said that: his own mother was the dumpiest woman I ever saw in my life."

On another occasion, when Knight was walking up Marischal Street with a student on a very disagreeable day of wind and rain—the rain was dashing direct against their faces—he replied thus to some ingeniously proffered remark of his companion about the fifteenth century :—

"All I know is, that this is a d——d bad day, whatever century it be in!"

Another time, he was walking and chatting with a student in a pleasant outskirt of the town. It was the week of the half-yearly meeting of the Provincial Synod of the Clergy in Aberdeen, when there was always a good deal of ecclesiastical bustle for the townspeople to take interest in :—

"Have you been at the Synod to-day, master, to hear the Clergy debating?" asked Knight; and on the reply being in the negative—

"You should go," added he; "you should go *once*. See everything once, master; see everything

once, while you're young: when you're older, you wont care so much about it."

A good many more sayings of Knight might be collected, all of them such little satirical outbursts tending to the disintegration of one's juvenile reverence for conventional beliefs and customs. Altogether, I can look back upon him now as a man of far more than average ability, who performed the duties of his post with beautiful regularity and efficiency, gave us much delightful matter that we were likely to get from no one else, and did us good even by those seemingly malicious twitchings to the surface of some fund of unexpressed thought which circumstances compelled him to carry placidly to his grave.

Knight died in December 1844, thus predeceasing by about thirty years the two Marischal College professors with whom he stands associated in my recollections. A characteristic of his, quite unknown to me at the time I was in his class, was his strong love of Marischal College and of all matters appertaining to its history. No colleague of his, and no predecessor of his, was comparable to Knight in this respect. He had explored the history of the University with indefatigable curiosity and zeal; and manuscript notes and collections on that subject, left by him at his death, have been among the most valuable materials used by Mr P. J. Anderson in his splendid volumes of Records of Marischal College and University, already referred to as

having been published by the New Spalding Club.

Of all my college friends, Alexander Bain stands *per se*. He is the one of them all with whom my friendship has been longest, most peculiar, and most close. From the very beginning—from seeing him in Kidd's congregation on Sundays—I had known him by face before knowing him by name.[1] Later, I had heard of him as a boy of whom Dr Cruickshank had taken particular notice for the evidences of his extraordinary arithmetical ability in a school examination, and whom Dr Cruickshank had kept in view in consequence ever since. But it was not till one day in October 1836 that we met and exchanged words. It was in the street outside the City Chambers or Court-house, where a little crowd of students were waiting for the official announcement by the Lord Provost and Magistrates of the results of the recent Bursary Competition. Having no interest myself in the Bursary Competition that year, I was present only out of curiosity, observing the others. Thus, Bain and I came together; I a fluttering *semi*, not quite fourteen years old, he a grave, pale-faced youth, four years my senior,

[1] My father used to say his first remembered sight of Alexander Bain was in Dr Kidd's congregation, when he was quite a little fellow, and Bain, four years older than he was, sat in a pew in front of him, and he was able to notice Bain's head, which at the time was absolutely bald, having been shaven after a fever; but which was "a very good shape of head." Bain was at the moment singing, with his mouth wide open, and with great fervour. "A little fellow, with a perfectly bald head, and his mouth wide open, singing like a young mavis.'—F. M.

though only then about to don the red gown. Somehow we took to each other; and from that day we were fast friends.

Through the rest of 1836, and through 1837, 1838, and 1839, our meetings, for talks within doors, or for walks to Rubislaw and other suburbs, were frequent—latterly almost daily. He had many things to tell me that were then new to me, and out of the track of our college routine. For, though his most obvious occupations were still with mathematics and physical and natural science, he had been reading and thinking in various other directions. Already, in fact, his clear and strong intellect had been exercising itself on questions theological and metaphysical; and there had begun to be discernible in him what have since become known as his characteristic philosophical tenets and tendencies. They were not indeed then manifested in such pure and unimpeded fashion as afterwards, but were rooted still to a considerable extent in the popular theology of the time and place. At that time, I remember, Robert Hall and Channing were among his favourite theological authors. He had a rich sense of humour. Flakes and phrases from Falstaff's speeches, over which he had been laughing himself in his last Shakespearian reading, would come into his mouth to invite laughter in others; and, when he had read Greek in sufficient quantity, he fastened similarly, I observed, on laughable particular phrases which he had found in Lucian or in Aristophanes.

CHAPTER XII

PERSONAL MEMORIES AND FRIENDSHIPS

A MEMORABLE incident in Aberdeen was the *Burning of the Burking House.* The story might be worth telling at length were this the place for it. Suffice it to say that "the Burking House" was the popular name for an anatomical school and dissecting room in Aberdeen. It had been erected with a carelessness of public prejudice especially culpable at a time when the recollection of the Edinburgh Burke and Hare murders was rife, and the poor and ignorant in Scottish towns believed secret "burking" to procure subjects for dissection to be a regular practice in the medical profession: moreover, it stood in an open part of the town near the Infirmary, and in the midst of dwelling-houses inhabited by artisans and their families.

For some time the "Burking House" had been a horror in the neighbourhood. Children, or young maid-servants, if they had to pass that way in the dark, would keep on the other side of the street; and when they came opposite the awful tenement within which they fancied skeletons hung up and the sheeted dead lying on tables, would run as hard

as they could in mortal fear. At last things became worse. It was rumoured that dogs had been seen coming out of the backyard of the premises with bones—and what bones?—in their mouths. Some such rumour, running through the households and workshops of that quarter of the town, stirred up forces in human nature deeper than obedience to law, and banded together a number of determined spirits among the younger workmen for an act of popular wrath. Not a whisper of what was intended had got about, when one afternoon, in broad daylight, the building being then full of medical students attending the regular lecture, it was besieged by a body of men who had met on purpose, and who, first driving or dragging out all who were within it, then deliberately set it on fire.

Dr Knight chanced to be among those present in the building, and was one of the few who showed fight to the rioters; and the story of his personal prowess on this occasion, and how in particular he had grappled with two of the biggest rioters at the doorway and hurled them back into the street, was among our college legends of his strength. But this was several years before I knew him; and all I recollect of the incidents of the riot is a muffled rumour, "The Burking House is on fire!" that reached the Grammar School during lesson hours; and our pelting down Blackfriars Street, after we were dismissed, to the scene of the uproar, where

by that time the police were in force.[1] Strangely enough, I forget what became of those who were arrested, or whether the real ring-leaders were among them; but I believe there was a disposition not to press matters too hard, in a case where public sympathy with the motives of the rioters was so general; and I have since had reason to know that among the ring-leaders were some young mechanics of superior character and intelligence, afterwards well known.

Clergymen figure rather numerously among my Aberdonian reminiscences. The minister of the West Church, or West St Nicholas, the congregation of which included the most aristocratic portion of the citizens, was Alexander Dyce Davidson, an eminent former graduate of Marischal College, and still in his prime. A modest and conscientious man of meditative habits, who smoked a good deal in private, and to whom that indulgence, then rare among the clergy, was forgiven because of the great regard for him otherwise, he had something of the

[1] My father remembered the coming in of "Peel's new police," ("peelers") into Aberdeen. They did not recommend themselves to him and his small playmates, because one of their first acts was to put a stop to the games of marbles in a little court or quiet place the children had chosen for this purpose near their homes. The first Whig Provostship—after 1832—was during my father's second year at the Grammar School, and the first Whig Provost of Aberdeen was Dr Blaikie's father. The Lord Provost and Magistrates always distributed the prizes, and my father, who had already been present at two prize-givings, was able to contrast the prizes of this third year with the previous prizes of a Tory dynasty; the Whig prizes seemed to him very shabby in comparison. This, my father used to say, was his "first sensation of the coming in of the Whigs."—F.M.

fire, or at least the heat, of real genius in him, and could be movingly eloquent at times in the pulpit. His colleague in the East Church, or East St Nicholas, was James Foote, an older man, author of a voluminous exposition of St Luke; and the ministers of the two other churches, known repectively as the South Church and the North Church, were William King Tweedie, a man of much literary ability, afterwards removed to Edinburgh, and John Murray, an excellent man, known for his lameness of gait, and for a very hearty speech and manner. Besides these four, whose churches were named after the chief points of the compass, and who were reckoned therefore as the principal city clerics, there were some eight or nine more ministers, all belonging, as well as these four, to the "Establishment"; of whom I remember best Abercromby Lockhart Gordon of Greyfriars, *alias* the College Kirk; Alexander Spence of Foolder, or St Clement's; David Simson of Trinity Chapel (vulgarly called "The Tarnties"); Gavin Parker of Union Terrace Chapel (a resolute High Calvinist); and James Bryce, a large-bodied man, the successor of Dr Kidd in Gilcomston Chapel, *sed quantum mutatus ab illo*!—

In addition to the Established clergymen of the town, however, there were ministers of one or other of the dissenting bodies which then (the Free Church not yet in existence) worshipped separately from the Establishment. Notable among these was Henry Angus, a man of stately presence and a noble cast

of head and countenance, who was minister of a small congregation that were much attached to him, but the really high character of whose powers was, I think, a discovery of a few students, who, having chanced to hear him once or twice, and caring little for ecclesiastical denominations and distinctions provided they could obtain what they called "ideas," went to his chapel again and again. Perhaps because he had become aware of this fact, and it had roused the indolence of a naturally powerful mind, they did get "ideas" for their pains, and were delighted now and then by flashes of imagination and expression beyond the usual popular range.

Almost at the other pole among the preachers of the town was Patrick Robertson, usually styled "of Craigdam," after the country place where he had been minister before settling in Aberdeen. His congregation in Aberdeen was a chance gathering of the poorest of the poor, but was overflowing on Sunday evenings. He was a grey-haired veteran, whose natural genius, I should say, was mainly that of a humorist. He carried something of his humour with him into the pulpit, where, though he spoke a dialect not far removed from vernacular Scotch, he was very shrewd, very fervid, and very evangelical. Passionate searchers after "ideas" as some of us were, we were willing to try what even Patrick Robertson could do for us in that commodity; and occasionally we dropped in upon his Sunday evening lecture. It was really racy matter. Not only did

he give us what we were willing to call "ideas," but I once heard from him what I can only call an idea respecting ideas. It came in this wise:—"And now, my friends," he said, beginning a new section in his discourse, and speaking in his habitual semi-Scotch which spelling will hardly indicate:—"And now, my friends, I am goin' to give you an idea: (pronounced *eedaia*).

"This *eedaia* that I am goin' to give you is not of so much use in itself as it will be of use in makin' way in your minds for anither *eedaia*, that I mean to give you afterwards, but which you wouldna be sae likely to understand if I didna give you this *eedaia* first. There are lots of pairs of *eedaias*, my brethren, that are connectet in this way: you may ca' them *needle and thread eedaias*."

What the two ideas were, and which was the needle and which the thread on the occasion, I have quite forgotten; but I have not found in Quintilian or in Whately or in any other book on Rhetoric any phrase that has struck me as better worth remembering than Patrick Robertson's "needle and thread ideas," with the maxim it involves that one ought to take care always, in discoursing, to put the needle first.

Patrick Robertson had some enthusiastic admirers. Among these was a sturdy little old man named George Legg, whose occupation in life was going about with a wheel-barrow, a broom and a shovel:—he was, in truth, a scavenger. But the Muses had

visited George among his shovels. He printed a small collection of his poems, of which I could repeat scraps yet. One was an ode to his favourite preacher, beginning thus :—

> "Mr Patrick Robertson,
> Who long did serve the Lamb,
> In that department of his Church,
> In Tarves at Craigdam."

Another poem was autobiographic, and contained this touching stanza :—

> "I once was young and now am old,
> Just in my seventieth year ;
> Yet ne'r a woman I beguiled,
> As I can safely swear."

Why, after George Legg, I should think of Peter Kerr, I hardly know ; for Peter was a man of conspicuous civic standing, well-to-do, and of rather impressive appearance. Peter was the sexton, or head grave-digger, of St Nicholas Churchyard, called the Town's Churchyard, as being the chief burying-ground of the city. Peter was a character ; and one of his characteristic notions I once myself heard him expound :—

"The ministers," he said, "speak a great deal about the resurrection of the body. Now, that is a subject about which I may naturally be allowed to ken something ; and I have an argument of my own about it, that nane o' them kens o'. In the course of years, after bodies are buried, the bones become lichter and lichter ; but that is not always the case. After a time, I have noticed that *some auld*

bones begin to grow heavier. It's very curious, is it not?"

Evidently, Peter's notion was that he had detected some in his domain beginning to come round again.

At last Peter himself died.

> "Age, with his stealing stages,
> Hath clawed him in his clutch,
> And hath shipp'd him intill the land,
> As if he had never been such."

There was variety enough, both of persons and of things, in the Aberdeen of those days to afford study and amusement for the whole life-time of any native whose lot it was to live there permanently. Nor was that so unusual a fate for Aberdonians then as it is now. Individuals among them did, of course, then as now, go to all parts of the earth; but the proportion of those who remained all their lives at home, or within a moderate distance of home, was greater then than now. In those pre-railway days, indeed, the range of travel for persons of moderate means, even into parts immediately around one's home, was very limited. Till 1839, at all events, my own excursions from Aberdeen into the region about it had been few.[1]

[1] One of my father's recollections of Aberdeen in those early days of the century, was the custom of taking children with whooping-cough across the mouth of the Dee, from one of the quays at Aberdeen to the village of Torry on the opposite shore, as a charm, supposed to be a cure for what they called "the hoast."—F. M.

In my childhood, I had been taken to Rothes, in Morayshire; and some of the incidents of that visit remain vivid in my memory even now. I remember being shown a dark score on the inside wall of the main room of one of the cottages of the village, and being told that it marked the height to which the waters of the Spey had risen in the cottage in the great Morayshire floods of 1829; I remember the ruined castle on the hill; I remember the merriment of a company assembled in a farm-house on a New Year's night (old style), and my slipping out by myself from the noise and the blazing lights within the house into the vast darkness without, where a looming mass of cliff on the other side of the Spey appalled me by its dim and ghastly mysteriousness. It seemed like some awful boundary of the whole earthly world.

Later on, there came holiday weeks, in successive summers, either at Muiresk, near Turriff, where the Deveron divides Aberdeenshire from Banffshire, or at Strichen, in the same North Aberdeenshire district. The Laird of Muiresk was then Colonel Spottiswoode, a retired Indian, whose wife was one of the genial Farquhar family. Her youngest brother, Tommy Farquhar, afterwards high in the Army Medical Service in India, was my fellow-guest and companion in my visits to Muiresk. We rode the pony in the paddock, we rambled together about the banks of the Deveron, or drove with the house-party—once even

as far as to Fraserburgh, that northernmost town of the Aberdeenshire coast.[1]

Strichen and Muiresk are blended in my recollections; for the minister of Strichen was the Rev. Alexander Simpson, the father of my friend and college-fellow of the same name; and the Simpsons and the Farquhars were related. What pleasant memories I have of that kindly manse!—of the old village of Strichen, and of days when young Alexander Simpson and I, with our class-fellows, Alexander Keith and Richard Gavin, rambled together over the

[1] The Muiresk pony, "Donald", was so over-fed and lazy that he threw everyone who tried to get on his back, till the gardener, a big tall man, coming to the rescue, literally tied his own long legs under the pony, and stuck on; after which Donald became meek enough. The Muiresk carriages bore the Spottiswoode crest and motto, "Patior ut Potior"; and my father—then a boy about thirteen years old—thought this incorrect, and took an opportunity of suggesting to Mrs Spottiswoode that the meaning would be finer, and the whole motto, with the play of the vowels, neater, if it were altered to "Patior ut Potiar"; and, though nothing was said at the time, the little fellow was delighted to see, on his next visit, that the motto had *been altered according to his suggestion.* The Spottiswoodes used to attend the Forglen Church; and Mr Thorburn, the minister of Forglen Parish, was a very fine man, whose memory my father always venerated. Once he rowed the minister and his wife, who had been visiting at Muiresk, across the Deveron in the little coble boat belonging to the house.

"Well, Charon, what must I give you?" asked the minister, smiling, as he stepped out on the opposite bank. "An obolus!" said the boy at once, well up in Lucian;—which pleased the good minister greatly.

Some years later, when my father was staying with Mr and Mrs Thorburn at Forglen Manse, the household was filled with anxiety as to impending events. It was on the eve of the Disruption. The great Abercromby family at Forglen, and the Spottiswoodes at Muiresk, were on the Patronage side, and there were no longer pleasant visits between the Manse and Muiresk. The minister's little daughters had been questioning their parents pathetically if they would "have to go out into service."—F. M.

neighbourhood, or climbed together Mormond Hill! The last time I visited Strichen, I walked to it—almost all the way—from Rothes. It was fifty miles, and a day of almost continuous rain, with thunder-storms and flashes of lightning. For some part of the way I had the convenient help of a mail-gig; but for the rest, I tramped it on foot, through Keith, Portsoy and Banff, arriving at Strichen Manse, and to its hospitable welcome, late at night, drenched and footsore. This was my longest excursion up to 1839.

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